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[“YOU ARE FEARFULLY PROUD,” SAID ALMA, “BUT I SUPPOSE MRS MENTEITH IS SURE TO PUT THINGS RIGHT!”]

TWO MISS DANES.

CHAPTER III.

SECOND marriages have a knack of running in some families. Just as Sir Geoffrey himself had married twice, so had his father; but there was not quite such a gap between the Baronet and his half-brother as between his own children, and in his way he had really been fond of Cyril, and grieved honestly when the younger son took his portion and went out to Australia, there to seek wealth as a sheep farmer.

Unfortunately, Geoffrey's first wife quarrelled desperately with poor Cyril, whom she suspected of envying her baby boy his claims on Dame Croft; and, perhaps, the emigrant feared his letters might become a bone of contention between the wedded pair, and so wrote seldom. Certainly there was a strange constraint in the correspondence, and Geoffrey learned very little of his brother beyond the fact of his marriage and the birth of his son, Kenneth, before the news came of his death,

sent in a few rather incoherent lines signed “Beatrice Dane,” and giving the Baronet the impression that his unknown sister-in-law was very young and very poorly educated.

In this he wronged her. Beatrice was of gentle birth and breeding, but she had an almost morbid dread of her husband's family. She was tormented with the fear Sir Geoffrey might seek to deprive her of the guardianship of little Kenneth, and she carried this fancy to such an extent that even when she returned to England a few years later with her second husband, she never troubled to make Ken known to his relations.

And now she was again a widow. A widow with almost priceless wealth, which must perforce go to her second family, and Kenneth was thirty-four, a lawyer of some talent in his own particular branch of the profession, but who, alas! worked very hard for a moderate income, since after paying the premium for his stepson to be articled to a first rate firm of solicitors, Andrew Menteith considered his duty to Kenneth amply fulfilled.

Perhaps the mother repented of her selfish-

ness when she saw her first-born, despite his superior birth, looked down upon by her husband's wealthy friends. Perhaps, in her heart, she hoped the Indian merchant might leave Ken a handsome legacy, but the young man's name was not even mentioned in the will.

His half-sisters had splendid fortunes. His mother received a liberal annuity, but Ken was still dependent on his own exertions, and received three hundred a-year as managing clerk to Chepstow and Morgan, the firm to whom he had been articled.

“You must let me buy you a partnership,” said his mother, eagerly. “What is the use of money to me if I may not spend it on my children!”

“Spend it on Molly and Georgie,” replied Kenneth, smiling. “They have a claim on it. I am afraid I am very proud, but I cannot accept anything bought with Mr. Menteith's money. If he had wanted me to benefit by it he would have provided for it in his will!”

So Mrs. Menteith had to give up the point. She and her girls lived in the large suburban mansion her husband had purchased on his

first return to England. Ken had lodgings perhaps two miles off.

Not a week passed without his visiting his mother. He was her right hand in every difficulty; but she was forced to own to herself he reaped no benefit from her wealth.

But for her selfishness of long ago Kenneth would have visited, as an equal, at his uncle's house, have made influential friends, and, perhaps, have obtained a Government appointment.

Now he seemed likely to remain a managing clerk all his days, for though a duly admitted solicitor, and one well known in his particular branch, he had no capital with which to start on his own account, and Messrs. Cnepsjon and Morgan showed no sign of offering to take him into partnership.

As for Kenneth himself, he troubled his mother intensely because he seemed so satisfied with his position and prospects, or rather, poor fellow, his want of prospects.

"If you would only use some of my money, Ken," she bemoaned, "you would soon be rich enough to repay me, and I do so want to see you a great man!"

Ken laughed, and shook his head.

"I don't think I was meant to be rich, mother. My greatest ambition is a cottage in the country and garden. I should not care for a mansion like this, and a carriage and pair!"

Beatrice Menteith sighed. How like he was to his father, the lover of her youth. Cyril had always loved outdoor life and pursuits, it had been Kenneth's dream to become a farmer, but Mr. Menteith had put a stop to the fancy in the bud, declaring the lad would never earn bread and cheese by it.

Looking at Ken to-night, with his bright, attractive face, and his blue eyes so like his father's it came home to his mother sadly that she had spoilt his life.

"Nonsense!" Ken said, lightly, when she almost hinted as much. "You will see me a great lawyer yet. I like my profession, and mean to make a name in it, only when I am famous I shan't enjoy myself by going to big dinners, and giving crowded 'at homes,' it is not my idea of happiness!"

"But it may be Alma's, Ken."

For a moment his face clouded over, but the next instant it was as bright as ever.

"Alma has never had a happy home," he said, simply. "When we are married and she has a nest of her own, she won't care to go gadding about in search of pleasure."

Mrs. Menteith was silent. Like many mothers, she did not approve her son's choice, but unlike them she kept her opinions to herself.

Ken had suffered enough through his folly already. If he loved Alma Bertram and could be happy with her, no word of his mother's should cloud that happiness.

"It is just like Ken," said his younger half-sister, who was remarkably sharp-sighted. "After steering clear of love affairs till he was past thirty, of course he loses his heart to a girl who has nothing in the world to give him in return!"

"Alas, is very fond of Ken," interposed the mother, "and she is decidedly pretty!"

"So is a wiz doll!" returned George. "And Alma has just as much soul as one of those blue-eyed waxen toys Moily and I used to be so fond of. She will make Ken wretched, mamma, if he marries her!"

But no one hinted to Kenneth that Miss Bertram was unworthy of him. Even his stepfather had not volunteered his opinion of the engagement. Miss Bertram was welcomed at the beautiful house on Champion Hill, whenever her fiancé brought her there. It was rather a significant fact that she never visited the Menteiths without Kenneth, and that neither the girls nor their mother had ever been inside Alma's home, but no one appeared to notice this.

"When are you going to be married Ken?" asked his mother on this June evening when they found themselves tête-à-tête. "You have

been engaged two years, and if you won't let me help you, I should say your income is as much as it is likely to be for some time."

"Alma and I think of September," replied Ken, cheerfully. "Mrs. Bertram says we'd better wait till spring, but I am tired of waiting."

"Will Mrs. Bertram live with you?"

Ken opened his eyes.

"Oh, dear no! I don't think she would wish it herself, and I am sure Alma wouldn't! She wants a home of her own, poor child. Her aunt's rule has been a strict one."

"But Mrs. Bertram brought her up as her own child, and has been very kind to her!"

"They don't suit each other," explained Ken. "You see Alma has such pretty ways, and her aunt is grim and unsympathetic, but yet in a manner, I like Mrs. Bertram."

"So do I!" said Beatrice Menteith, warmly, "and she has been a second mother to Alma you must remember."

Ken said good-bye. He had promised to take Alma to see the fireworks at the Crystal Palace, and feared she would be waiting for him. The Bertrams lived in a semi-detached house at Brixton, of which Kenneth occupied the drawing-room floor.

He had lived there for seven years, but Alma had not been at home for half that time. When he first became Mrs. Bertram's lodger, his niece was a child at school. Then for twelve months she had been English teacher at a very "select seminary" at Caleis.

She came home at nineteen, very pretty, very attractive, and fascinating, with the result that in three months she was Kenneth Dane's affianced wife.

Many people wondered they did not marry; but Kenneth was anxious to provide a comfortable home, and even to lay by a little for his wife's future, and Alma hated the idea of housekeeping on small means. At Fountain-road she led a very butterfly sort of life; her aunt, though not rich, had enough for comfort and much preferred managing the house and servant herself to training her unwilling niece, so that Alma practised her music, tended the flowers in the little garden, and made her aunt a new cap or bonnet occasionally. Mrs. Bertram was quite content, with the result that Alma's days became rarely occupied, and long walks, shop gazing, and an eager quest after any kind of pleasure within her reach became almost second nature to her.

Ken was "saving up" for the furniture of their new home; but as he spent very little on himself, he had plenty of spare money to afford his divinity frequent trips to the Crystal Palace, subscription to Mudie's library, and other small delights. Alma was rather afraid of him, but intensely proud of her lover. Most of the girls she knew were engaged to shopmen, or, at the best small tradesfolks. To have a professional suitor was a decided improvement on her friends' prospects.

She was not in any hurry to be married, perhaps because she realised dimly, that in the intimacy of wedded life Ken must discover how very unlike she was to the ideal he believed her. Perhaps still more because she knew that once married she could not lead the idle life which had become habitual to her.

Ken was but human. He liked well-cooked food, punctual meals, and orderly ways. Mrs. Bertram provided all these. The house in Fountain-road was, in fact, a model of comfort in all these respects, and Alma had an idea that even with three hundred a-year she would not be able to achieve such good results, unless she put her shoulder to the wheel herself.

But how pretty she was. When Ken got home—he always called the house in Fountain-road home—and found her waiting for him in her blue dress and white feathered hat, he thought he had never seen so fair a picture.

He was dimly conscious that blue nun's

veiling was hardly a costume suited to the streets, but he would never have said so, and Alma would have gone down Fountain-road in her brilliant attire, had not Mrs. Bertram espied her, and insisted on her donning a long grey, dust cloak.

She was very pretty, but Georgie Menteith's criticism had not been so very unjust after all, for it really was the prettiness of a wax doll. Looking at Alma, an experienced person could have told at once her charms would not last.

Kenneth's first cousin, May Dane, would be beautiful even when tears had dimmed her eyes and time robbed her of her bloom; but, alas! Alma's eyes were of that very light blue which is always without expression, and whose colour fades in a few years, her kittenish plumpness would develop into absolute stoutness, and her flaxen hair would grow dull and scanty before she was forty.

But Kenneth never thought of the future. She was his first love, and he was content. If at times it struck him she never talked of books or the serious subjects which interested him, he always put it down to her youth, quite forgetting that his sister, Georgina, who could converse on any subject of the day, was not three months Alma's senior.

They caught the train, and reached the Palace within a good hour to spare before it was time to take their places for the fireworks.

Kenneth and his fiancée went towards a secluded part of the grounds, and sat down under a tree. Although they lived in the same house their opportunities for tête-à-tête were not unlimited.

Kenneth was off to London before Alma came down in the morning; and when he came home after half past six, Mrs. Bertram was far too much of a dragon to leave the young people to their own devices. It was an unwritten law of her aunt's that Alma should never enter the drawing-room; and the old lady did not always invite Mr. Dane to her own parlour. Besides, when she did, she was careful to make a third at the lovers' interview. Long walks on a Saturday afternoon, or to a distant church on Sundays, were Ken's only chance of enjoying Alma's company to himself.

Mr. Menteith had been dead now three months, and Alma was getting a little curious as to his widow's intentions. That nothing had been left to Kenneth absolutely she was, of course, aware, but she knew that his mother worshipped him, and with an allowance of five thousand a-year herself, it seemed impossible that she should allow her only son to continue to toll hard for less than six pounds a week.

Once or twice Alma had been on the point of inquiring what Mrs. Menteith meant "to do for him," but she was just a little afraid of her lover, and as the widow had been away from home almost ever since the funeral, it was quite possible nothing had been settled; but now Kenneth had come straight from a long talk with his mother, and Alma's hopes ran high.

"How was Mrs. Menteith looking?" she asked, almost as soon as they had sat down, "and what are their plans? Will they go on living at The Chestnuts?"

"My mother looks wonderfully well. They will stay where they are at present. She is fond of Champion-hill, and as the house belongs to Mary, it seems a pity to let it, though it is much too big for them."

"Mary is a lucky girl."

"Is she? I don't quite agree with you, Alma," said Mr. Dane, who knew perfectly that his elder sister's life happiness had been ruined seven years before, when her father sent away a true-hearted lover with scant courtesy because of his poverty.

"Of course she is, to have such a house as that, and ever so much money besides. How much has she, Ken?"

"Oh! Mr. Menteith made an 'eldest son' of Mary. She has ten thousand a-year of her own, and will have half as much again when

anything happens to my mother. A pretty good income, isn't it?"

"Splendid! And Georgie?"

"Why, how interested you are in figures to-night, Alma! I can't tell you much about Georgie. She has five thousand settled on her, and when she marries, Mary is to make her an allowance. Her father was always afraid of Georgie becoming a lady-doctor, or doing something eccentric, so he only left her enough to keep her from want. He knew he could trust her mother and Mary."

"I wonder he didn't leave you something, Ken!"

"I am very glad he didn't!"

Alma opened her eyes in such surprise, that he went on,—

"There was never any real liking between us, dear; and though I have been obliged to owe my education and start in life to him, I didn't want any further benefits."

"You are fearfully proud!" pouted Alma. "But I suppose it makes no difference really, for Mrs. Menteith is so fond of you, she is sure to put things right."

"I did not know that they were wrong. What do you mean, Alma?"

Alma did not like his tone, but she had gone too far to retreat; besides, she really wanted to know, as she put it, how they stood.

"I mean that, of course, she will buy you a partnership, or advance you some money to start in practice for yourself. She couldn't live rolling in money herself, and leave you only a clerk."

"My dear Alma, I was 'only a clerk' when you promised to be my wife!"

"But, of course, I knew your mother would do something for you," she retorted, "as soon as it was in her power, even if Mr. Menteith was too mean to help you!"

It was the most bitter moment of Kenneth's life. He began to understand this girl whom he had loved had accepted him because of his mother's wealth, but he was very patient with Alma. He would not judge her harshly yet.

"My dear child, there is no meanness in the matter. Mr. Menteith was a rich man, but I had not the slightest claim on him. When my mother married him he promised he would educate me and start me in life. From my childhood I knew perfectly he would never leave me his money, and I am very glad he did not."

The tears were in Alma's blue eyes, but her voice was very fretful as she said,—

"Then Mrs. Menteith ought to think of your interests. She owes as much to you as to those stuck up girls."

He winced at the adjective. He knew in his heart that Mary and Georgie did not deserve it, but he knew also, though he hated the idea, that they were superior to Alma in intelligence and education. She could not enter into their pursuits, and so she called them proud. He felt as though a burden had fallen on him, but he never tried to deceive Alma. Better far that she should know the whole truth.

"You must not speak one unkind word of them," he said, very gravely. "My mother offered to allow me half her income as long as she lived, and Mary wanted to raise a large lump sum out of her fortune to buy me a practice. I had a very difficult task to refuse them."

"Kenneth! You cannot mean you were mad enough to refuse? Why, if they really meant their offer we might have had a carriage and a big house and servants!"

"I suppose it is hard on you," he confessed. "But, Alma, if I had taken their charity I could never have held up my head again. You shall have the carriage and the big house some day, my darling, if you will only have patience with me. I will work hard and grow ambitious for your dear sake!"

But Alma would not smile on him. She drew her hand pettishly away.

"I think you have treated me shamefully.

Any man who loved me would have thought of my feelings and saved me from hardships."

She had gone too far. Kenneth Dane loved her passionately, but he was a proud man, and in that speech she had wounded every fibre of his heart.

"Listen, Alma," he began, very coldly, "for we had better understand each other thoroughly. When you accepted me two years ago did you know my income, and that I had no private means?"

"Yes. But—"

"I spoke to your aunt very plainly, and told her that though I was Mr. Menteith's stepson I had no chance of a legacy from him. Do you know what she answered, Alma?"

"Told you I was not worth your thinking about I expect," said Alma, frankly.

"She said that living as you had always been accustomed to three hundred a-year was ample for all needs, and that she would have given her consent had our income been even less."

"Aunt Emma is so old-fashioned."

"Now you know all," said Kenneth, gravely. "I have three hundred a-year, and it may be a long while before I am richer. Are you afraid to marry me, Alma?"

Alma smiled coquettishly.

"I shall have to manage differently. If you won't let Mrs. Menteith buy you a partnership she might allow me a few hundred a-year just for housekeeping, and you need never trouble your head about it."

"Alma, my wife shall not receive a penny from anyone but her husband!"

"Then put your pride in your pocket," she retorted, "and accept enough to make us comfortable. What is the use of my being young and pretty, Ken, if I am not to enjoy myself?"

"Alma!"

"There's my friend, Jenny Smith," went on Alma, remorselessly. "She's engaged to young Higgins the linen-draper. Of course he's not so clever as you, but he makes six hundred a-year clear; and Jenny is to live away from the shop, and keep two servants and a pony-carriage to take him in to business. Jenny will have everything quite genteel."

Kenneth winced at the words.

"Listen, Alma. I have saved enough for furniture, and I meant to look out for a house next month. Then if we were married at the beginning of September you would be settled down in your own home before the winter. Do you really mean, my darling, you are afraid to venture, and that you would rather wait until my salary is raised?"

"Why, you said yourself, Ken, you might not be any richer for years."

"Very true. But if you preferred waiting."

"I don't. Why, I might be quite old before you were any richer! No, Ken. The only proper thing is for you to be sensible, and tell Mrs. Menteith you have changed your mind, and—"

She was interrupted.

"I refuse."

"Then you never loved me?"

"We won't argue that," he said, keeping back his passionate reproaches by a mighty effort. "We won't even ask if you show much love for me. I refuse, once for all, to accept Alma even from my mother. If you will marry me next September I will work for you till I die, and save you from even the shadow of hardship. If you prefer to wait another year I will consent, though I think you will be using me badly."

She knew that she was pretty. She knew he loved her, and she staked everything on her own power over him.

"That won't do, Kenneth. I must think of myself a little. You must be reasonable and accept Mrs. Menteith's help—or we will part!"

The next day Mrs. Bertram's niece went off on a long visit to a school fellow at Brighton, and it was tacitly understood that before she

returned to her aunt's home Mr. Dane would have found another abode.

"I'm sorry you should have suffered through him of mine," said the old lady to Kenneth, when he came home the evening after Alma's departure; "but indeed, Mr. Dane, you've had an escape. She's my own husband's niece, but she's her mother's child in heart and mind. Her mother, who deserted her home when Alma was a baby, to go on the stage!"

Kenneth looked very grave.

"I would have worked until I died to save her an hour's pain," he said, simply; "but that would not have satisfied her!"

"No. I've known for months—years, Mr. Dane, she adopted you because she thought Mr. Menteith must leave you a fortune. It's been heavy on my mind I ought not to let you be deceived; but it's hard working, speaking against one's own flesh and blood. Anyway, sir, you're free now!"

But poor Kenneth could not quite feel his freedom a source of congratulation.

CHAPTER IV.

FACE to face sat Sir Geoffrey Dane with the messenger of sorrow. Hubert Clifford had known the Baronet for nearly thirty years. He was quite aware of the strange story of his family tree. He knew that the moment the breath was out of the old man's body his idolized child would have no claim on Dene Croft, which must pass to a granddaughter for whom he had nothing but aversion.

Very gently, almost tenderly, the younger man broke his evil tidings.

"Every penny you invested in the Great Wheal Company is lost. Sir Geoffrey!" he concluded, "and it is a mercy the liability is limited, and so they can make no further claim on your estate!"

"Ruined! My child is ruined!"

It was the truth. Mr. Clifford could not contradict him unfortunately.

"And in another month I should have sold my shares, and May would have had a handsome fortune. And Clifford, she is on the point of marriage. How am I to break the news to her fiancé husband?"

"If he is a man he will only cherish her more fondly," said the lawyer, gravely, "with her grace and beauty Miss Dane is a fortune in herself. But may I ask the name of her betrayer? I had no idea she was engaged!"

"My letter telling you of the fact was only posted this morning. Her fiancé is Lord Monkton, the son of an old friend of mine, and a man in whom I have every confidence."

Mr. Clifford knew the world better than poor Sir Geoffrey in his seclusion. The lawyer was quite aware of Leofric Lord Monkton's true character, and began to fancy Miss Dane a loss of fortune might be a blessing in disguise if it prevented her from becoming mistress of Monkton Castle, but he only said, gravely,—

"Why, Lord Monkton must be twice her age!"

"And if he is," said the Baronet, irritably, "what does it matter. I have implicit trust in Leofric. Though my child goes to him without a shilling he will welcome her gladly. They are to be married in August. I sent for you to draw the settlements."

"And is Miss Dane pleased at the arrangement which makes her a peeress?"

"May is a mere child, but she is a good, obedient daughter, and will not refuse her father's dying wish!"

"Not that I trust," said Hubert, earnestly, "you may have many years in store, Sir Geoffrey. As for this news, terrible as it is, it matters less that Miss Dane is penniless—she has such a disinherited suitor!"

"I should like you to tell him," said Sir Geoffrey, proudly. "You will understand when he is worthy even of my daughter. He is coming to dinner to night, so you will make his acquaintance and see how you have mis-

judged him. Of course, you will stay with us until to-morrow, Clifford, for the settlements must still be drawn up, even though on our side, alas! there is nothing left to settle."

It gave Hubert Clifford a strange feeling of uneasiness to see how well Sir Geoffrey had borne the disclosure. He had feared at his client's advanced age the blow might have fatally prostrated him; but Sir Geoffrey's spirit seemed marvellous, and Dr. Matthews, who had been attending him for a slight cold, told the lawyer—an old acquaintance of his—he had never seen him so cheerful.

"It would break his heart if this match fell through," said the little doctor, fussily, as Mr. Clifford walked with him to his carriage. "Of course one knows Monkton isn't worthy of Miss Dane, but her father's hopes are set on it!"

"I suppose Lord Monkton's are too?" said Hubert Clifford, thinking of the news he had brought, and wondering if it would at all change the peer's wishes.

"Oh, he is very much in love; but, to tell you a secret, he must marry soon unless he wishes to see himself beggared. His estate is fearfully encumbered, and unless he can raise twenty thousand before the end of the year the mortgagee will close!"

"And he expects that sum with Miss Dane?"

"He expects more! The dowager is rather fond of confiding in me, and from her I gather that Lord Monkton hopes not only to clear his estate by marrying Miss Dane, but that sufficient of her property will remain to keep her in pin money, and ultimately portion her younger children if such contingencies arise!"

"It seems a pity," said the lawyer, thoughtfully. "If she had 'come out' in London she would have been the belle of the season. Why should she be thrown away on a spendthrift twice her age?"

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't say a word against it," he urged, "Sir Geoffrey's health is much impaired in spite of his good spirits. He would never stand the shock of seeing his favourite scheme fall through. As for his daughter, I am sure if she had objected to the match he would not have urged it on her. Perhaps she likes the thought of a coronet, some girls do!"

Poor Mr. Clifford! To him the stately dinner seemed interminable. Miss Dane, dressed in white with a bunch of pale pink roses among the lace folds of her bodice looked a vision of youth and beauty.

Lord Monkton at her side, florid, stout, and middle-aged, seemed a sorry mate for her, and Sir Geoffrey's air of satisfaction, as he contemplated the pair was almost intolerable to the lawyer.

It was over at last. May had returned to the drawing-room. Sir Geoffrey left the table almost directly after his daughter.

"I have every confidence in Mr. Clifford," he told his future son-in-law; "and I think you will discuss things more freely without me," and then he passed out of the room, doubtless, meaning to have a nap in the library.

The two he left were both men of the world, but both shrank from the interview.

Lord Monkton, because he felt the lawyer understood his character far better than poor Sir Geoffrey; Mr. Clifford because he could not make up his mind which was worse for his client's child.

If Lord Monkton refused her on account of her loss of fortune, it would break her father's heart. If the peer looked over the disappointment now, was he the kind of man to visit it later on his wife's head?

Lord Monkton broke the silence.

"I suppose you prefer plain speaking, Mr. Clifford. Any way, I like it best, and it saves time. Unless I have twenty thousand pounds very shortly, I am ruined. I have no doubt, under your able management, Sir Geoffrey will see his way to drawing that sum from Miss Dane's fortune, and as I should like the

rest of her portion settled on herself, and her possible children, I do not think my proposal at all grasping or extreme."

"Neither do I," returned the lawyer, "as your estate once cleared, you would be able to support a wife in every comfort, but, unfortunately, it is impossible."

"You mean the old man will insist on the money being left in the funds?"

"I mean the money does not exist. Six months ago, against every argument I could bring to bear, Sir Geoffrey insisted on investing the thirty thousand pounds he had saved for his child in a new company, promising to pay fabulous interest. That company, Lord Monkton, collapsed yesterday, and he will not see a shilling of the fortune he put into it. I came down to day to break the news to him."

"But you don't mean he knows it? Why, at his age, such a blow is enough to stun him, especially when he remembers it is his own fault the poor girl is left penniless!"

"Sir Geoffrey has implicit confidence in you, Lord Monkton. He believes you love his daughter, and that you will only cherish her the more tenderly for her misfortunes."

"I do love her," said the peer, with a smothered oath, "but I can't marry her. I am a ruined man! Nothing but the hope of freeing my estate drove me to think of matrimony. I own when I saw Miss Dane, I was well content with what fate had in store for me, but to marry her penniless is out of my power."

Mr. Clifford hesitated.

"I do not think she has expensive tastes, and you say you love her."

"It is because I love her I will not think of marrying her," said Lord Monkton, firmly. "Have you ever seen my mother, Mr. Clifford?—No; heard of her? No. Well, I will just tell you this. The world calls her a good woman; but she loves money and position better than her own flesh and blood. It was she who proposed to me to seek a wealthy wife. She suggested May because the poor girl was near at hand, and she approved of her family. If I married Miss Dane now, and the mortgages foreclosed, as he would, my mother would make the poor girl's life one long misery. She would not leave us alone to sink or swim as we could, out she would never cease to haunt my wife with reproaches that she had ruined my prospects. No, Mr. Clifford, I do love May, and I won't expose her to that. Alone, I can cut things short, and go abroad, roaming where no one knows I am an English peer; but I won't marry May, either to bring her to a life resembling that of an adventurer, or to keep her in England within reach of my mother's tongue!"

"I think you have decided wisely. But what am I to tell Sir Geoffrey?"

"Tell him I never deceived him. That I told him the first time of spoke of my hopes that I was not rich enough to marry a penniless wife. After all," said Monkton, rather bitterly, "it is all his own fault! Who but a madman would have invested the girl's whole fortune in a bogus company? He has himself to thank for everything! There is no use in my seeing him. I will come over to-morrow to say good-bye to May."

But when the morrow came, every window of Danes Croft was darkened, and in one of the upper rooms lay the master of the house sleeping his last quiet slumber.

Poor Sir Geoffrey! His faith in Lord Monkton had been so perfect, that he had promised himself the pleasure of hearing the peer's own voice proclaim no change of fortune could alter his love for May.

Instead of going to the library, the baronet entered the conservatory, on to which two of the windows of the dining room opened, and there, with strained ears, he listened.

We know too well what he heard. His own condemnation and the knowledge that his child would be deserted by her lover. The blow was all too hard. He staggered and

fell to the ground. There, Hubert Clifford and the butler found him later on, when alarmed at his disappearance, they went in search of him.

They carried him to his own room, and sent for Dr. Matthews. Too late. Sir Geoffrey's spirit had fled, his much-loved child was alone in the world, and her unknown niece—the other Honor—was mistress of Danes Croft.

(To be continued.)

ALETHEA'S ORDEAL.

CHAPTER XXXIII.—(continued.)

ARTHUR, after that steady look into his lordship's eyes, would have found it impossible to refuse accompanying him, so strong was the fascination exerted over him by the Marquis' and with a strange sweet feeling at his heart, he sprang from the post into Lord Waldegrave's arms, and the horse bore them swiftly away.

"Alethea's boy," whispered Lord Waldegrave to himself, as they dashed onward. "It is strange that I love him instead of hating him. I would not harm a hair of his little head, and he shall not stay at school if he doesn't wish. I only want to frighten and humble her, and to grieve Richard Layne. It will nearly kill them both to lose the boy. When they shall have suffered enough, I will restore the child and retire to my hermitage!"

He sighed heavily, and then forgot his promised revenge, for the boy nestled confidingly in his breast, and looked up into his face with childlike fearlessness, and said,—

"Won't you tell me your name, sir?"

"I am Lord Waldegrave," was the reply. "My name is Arthur. I believe it's Arthur Layne. I am Uncle Richard's nephew," explained the lad, evidently puzzled as to his own identity. "There's something strange about me, I suppose, for I don't seem to have any papa. I wish I were your papa!"

"You wish I were your papa?" cried his lordship. "Don't you hate me then, Arthur?"

"No, indeed, I don't!" was the warm response. "I love you, and I do wish you were my papa!"

The Marquis's lip quivered under his moustache, and there was moisture in his gloomy eyes.

With sudden impulse he bent over the little face upon his bosom, and kissed it with reverent tenderness.

His lordship was so unused to loving words that he was touched to the very heart by the lad's wish, and he responded to it with all his soul.

"If I were your papa," he said, trying to smile, "I should take you to my home in Wales, and give you a horse like this and teach you to ride, and we would have grand times together. I should be very proud of you, Arthur—but I talk like a child," he added, checking himself.

For some time they rode on in silence, the boy amusing himself by looking at the hedges and fields they passed, and listening to the music of the birds, and the thoughts of the man turning to his past, which had once been as bright and cloudless as that summer morning.

At length Arthur sat upright and chattered away as busily as if he had always known the Marquis, and as confidingly as if his lordship were his best friend, and the nobleman unbent to him, completing his conquest of the child's heart by his gentleness and kindness.

"We are almost at the school, Arthur," he said, as they entered the principal street of the pretty village. "A few minutes more, and you will find yourself in the midst of playmates."

"I wish I could ride with you for ever!" sighed Arthur.

His lordship smiled, promising to visit him often, and they rode on, coming to the school-buildings, which the lad eyed without interest.

The sight of half-a-dozen boys at play in the well-shaded yard aroused him, however, and he began to talk eagerly of the amusement he would have, and begged to be set down that he might make acquaintance with them.

"We must see the principal first," said his lordship, restraining the boy's impetuosity with a gentle hand. "You must be introduced to him, and he will introduce you to these young gentlemen."

They rode into the courtyard, dismounted, and were conducted to the drawing-room, where they awaited the coming of the principal.

His lordship's heart almost misgave him for the part he was acting, when he looked at Arthur, but the little fellow was too innocent to suspect him of any evil design, and clung about him confidingly, only too happy in being permitted to hold his hand. The principal soon made his appearance, and after greeting him politely, the Marquis said,—

"This young gentleman is the ward to whom I alluded in yesterday's visit, doctor. He is called Arthur Layne."

It did not strike the teacher that there was anything singular in the manner in which the lad's name was announced. His noble appearance attracted his attention, and he called the boy to him and conversed with him in a paternal manner, winning the good opinion of the keen-sighted lad.

"You won't be obliged to study for several weeks, Master Layne," he said. "By the time the school will reopen you will be well acquainted with your class mates. Shall I introduce you to some of the boys?"

Arthur assented, and the kind-hearted doctor rang a bell, and requested that the Masters Levins should be summoned to the drawing-room.

"They are my eldest boys," he explained, "and are so good that I generally make them the guardians of the new comers. Arthur will feel at home with them directly!"

A few minutes passed, and the Masters Levins entered the apartment.

They were frank, merry-looking lads, and Arthur went up to them at once, offering his hand when they were introduced to him, and behaving with a quiet ease and good breeding that made the Marquis proud of him.

They soon withdrew, taking Arthur with them, to the play-ground, and the Marquis made the necessary business arrangements for his *protégé*, enjoined the head of the establishment to deal very gently with his new pupil, and to afford him every indulgence in his power.

"You cannot spoil a nature so essentially noble as his," he said. "He is his mother's darling, and has been always petted. I think kindness and gentleness to him!"

"He will meet with nothing but kindness here, my lord," responded the doctor, truthfully. "My wife and I are very fond of children, and in these lads committed to our care we see again the boys we lost many years ago. All children are dear to us for the sake of our own dead ones!"

He spoke so tremulously and sincerely, with such a hopeful look shining through his sadness, that Lord Waldemere felt that he was a man to be trusted to the fullest extent, and he congratulated himself that he had secured such a home as this for Arthur.

His lordship remained to the two o'clock dinner, being urged to do so by the doctor, and observed with pleasure that the repast was tempting and amply sufficient for the hungry boys, who ate at the family table.

The doctor's wife took her position opposite to her husband. She was a motherly-looking woman, with a placid, unwrinkled face, and

kindly eyes that beamed affectionately upon each and all of her young charges.

After dinner the Marquis took his leave of the doctor and his wife, and retired to the drawing-room to have a few final words with Arthur.

"Well, how do you like it here, my boy?" he asked, drawing him upon his knee.

"First-rate!" was the enthusiastic response. "The boys all like me and I like them. I've learned to play ball already. What would mamma say to that?"

Lord Waldemere did not like to think what she would say.

Evading the question, he asked,— "Do you think you will be contented here for a few weeks?"

A shade of sadness passed over Arthur's face, and he replied,—

"I think I shall, if mamma will only write to me every day, as she always has done. Don't you think she will, sir?"

"I think not, as she has so much company. But I will come for you in a few weeks, and take you home to her! I must say good-bye to you now!"

He would have simply shaken hands with Arthur, but the latter clung to him, pressing his childish face against his bearded one, and kissing his lips again and again.

At length one of the Masters Levins came in search of his new friend, and the Marquis tore himself away, and took his departure.

As he rode slowly away from the school, he noticed Arthur surrounded by his boyish companions, ball in hand, yet gazing after him, his soul in his eyes.

That gaze haunted his lordship as he retraced his steps to the Castle.

He began to blame himself for what he had done, accusing himself for a desire of petty revenge, and despising himself for endeavouring to wound Alethea Wycherly through her innocent boy.

"I am a monster, I believe," he exclaimed, remorsefully, as he rode into the avenue of the Castle grounds. "I can hardly imagine that I should have carried off that boy. Yet I shall restore him soon. I only desired to alarm Alethea. I think I will go for him tomorrow. I can get him home again before Layne will have informed her, and then I can go away and leave her to her fate!"

This resolution appeased his conscience, and he alighted at the portico, and went up to his rooms in better spirits than he had enjoyed at any time during the day.

The excursionists had not returned when, after a careful toilet, he sauntered back to the portico, and his remorseful thoughts had fair play during the hour that followed.

He seemed to have fallen in his own estimation by that day's act.

The confidgness and innocence of the lad were remembered by him with the keenest of self-reproach that he should have taken advantage of those traits to lure him from his home and break his mother's heart.

He began to hate and loathe himself.

Gifted by nature with the finest feeling, and educated to the nicest sense of honour, the part he had played astonished himself. He felt degraded in his own eyes, and wondered how he could have been so carried away by his revengeful passions.

"I am sure I don't wonder Alethea hates me," he muttered, gloomily and mournfully. "She knew me better than I knew myself. No wonder she preferred Richard Layne. He is an angel of light compared with me—base as he is to desert her now for another!"

His lordship was mistaken.

Richard Layne could not have borne comparison with him. The frank and pleasant Richard lacked the grandeur of character that distinguished Lord Waldemere. His good-nature was but a poor compensation for the lofty intellect, the unbending will, the earnest soul of Waldemere.

In the midst of his self-torture the excursionists returned.

They were in fine spirits and chatting gaily.

Sir Wilton Werner, in a happy mood, rode beside the basket carriage, conversing with Alethea, and the remainder of the party in a confused group closely followed.

In his new humility, Lord Waldemere started forward to assist Miss Wycherly to the portico, but the Baronet leaped from his horse and approached her at the same moment, offering his hand. She accepted it, ignoring that of Waldemere, and passed the latter with a haughty sweep of her garments, which aroused all his old revengeful feelings, and banished his remorse and regret for Arthur's abduction.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Alone in the dark, alone on the wave,
To buffet the storm alone—
To struggle aghast at thy watery grave,
To struggle, and feel there is none to save,
God shield thee, helpless one!

Mrs. E. Oakes Smith

The week that followed her sending the indignant letter to Lord Templecombe passed very slowly to poor Natalie. She had no heart to study the abstruse works he had sent her, and became convinced that he had purposely chosen them too difficult for her unaided comprehension.

She began to see that he was filling her path with stumbling-blocks at the very outset, in order to keep her mind occupied with other thoughts than *joys*, or to discourage her from attempting to fit herself for her position as his bride and countess.

"I am sure," she mused one morning, "that all countesses, do not converse on philosophy and such difficult things. If they do, I can keep silent. I shan't study them any more unless with a governess who can make them interesting to me!"

So she flung aside all her scholastic works, and brought into prominent view the novels and poems her husband had sent her.

These proved to be more congenial with her taste. She loved all that was beautiful in nature, and poetry stirred her soul always to its utmost depths when it dwelt upon the glories of the stars, the grandeur of the sea, or the winning beauties of flowers.

But there were times when she could not read—when her own wrongs and sorrows pressed so heavily upon her that she had no smiles or tears for the joys and griefs of the heroines of her favourite fictions, and when her soul chafed at its narrow bounds, and her feet restlessly paced the floor in patience that was almost unbearable.

She accustomed herself to rising before the sun, and rambling with Linnet upon the moor, returning in time for breakfast, which old Elspeth served in sullen silence, her suspicions of Natalie increasing as the days passed and Lord Templecombe had not yet arrived.

These morning walks grew shorter every day, but they were the only pleasant seasons in the young wife's daily life. The air seemed fresher then, and her frame possessed more of vigour and elasticity than at a later hour.

The days were intensely warm, and the only breezes that moved the curtains at the Fens were so laden with miasma that Natalie soon learned to keep her windows shut after the rising of the sun.

Daily she grew more languid, feeling her strength ebbing from her as the tide recedes from the shore, and a vague alarm began to take possession of her soul.

Thus the week passed.

On the last morning of the seventh day the young wife walked upon the moor with Linnet, as usual, but her movements were so slow and languid that she soon returned to the shade of the porch, and seated herself upon the steps.

"Nata-lee, you are fading like my flowers!" said Linnet, mournfully, glancing from some

withering blossoms in her hand to her young mistress.

"I know it, dear," responded Natalie. "The bad air is killing me. I am going to leave you, Linnet, to-morrow. I must go back to my friends—"

"I will go too, Nata-lee! You said so. I will not stay here without you. Granny don't want Linnet."

Natalie would have argued the question with the "daft girl," but at that moment the breakfast-bell rang.

Arising, they passed through the corridor, entering the low and pleasant dining-room together.

The table, as usual, was placed near an open window, looking out upon the moor, and was spread with a tempting repast of rolls, coffee, and conserves fruits, and Natalie took her place, Linnet seating herself opposite.

The young wife had but little appetite, but she ate and drank mechanically, with a nervous shrinking from the sullen glances of old Elepeth, who, unable longer to maintain silence, at last exclaimed,

"It's a week to day, my lady, and your husband has not come for you yet, and you haven't even heard from him. I wish I knew what to do. I should have written to the agent, only it's such a long walk to Carefort to post a letter. I suppose if you're not come for to-day, you'll leave the Fens to-morrow?"

Natalie bowed, a choking at her throat preventing the utterance of a single word, and she arose from the table abruptly, retiring to her own room.

Linnet followed, and stationed herself just outside the closed door, her pretty shadowed by the half-closed thoughts "Nata-lee" was in trouble.

The young wife's first movement on entering her chambers was to drag forth the larger box of the two brought her by the Earl's valet.

She then proceeded to pack in it the clothing her husband had sent her, the books she had found at Mount Rose, and which had belonged to her mother, the letters, &c., after which she locked and strapped her trunk ready for departure.

She had quite given up all hope of the Earl's coming to her, and decided that he must have fallen back upon his former conclusion of denouncing her if she should appear to threaten him.

She made her preparations for walking to Carefort, deciding to remain at the Crown Inn long enough to admit of sending for her trunk; and she would then go back to the hidden cottage, and claim the protection of her high-born sister and aunt.

She did not trouble herself to pack the educational works Roke had brought her. They had inspired her with a feeling of profound disgust for what they taught; and she mentally resolved to spend no more time upon them, but rest contented with the knowledge she had already acquired.

Her preparations fully made, she admitted Linnet, whose presence at the door she had discovered, and talked with her for a long time, endeavouring to soothe her grief at her approaching departure.

But she could not shake the girl's resolution to accompany her.

The morning wore on, the sun attaining its midday position in the heavens, and the air grew hushed and still.

It was then that Natalie, looking from her window, observed a carriage advancing towards the Fens over the moor.

"He is come!—he is come!" she murmured, her heart almost standing still in her sudden joy. "Elmer is come!"

She continued to watch the vehicle's approach in breathless excitement, and it seemed to her to creep onwards at a snail's pace.

Still on it came, and she could at last discern that it contained but one occupant, and that occupant was Lord Templecombe himself.

It was not long—though the minutes seemed to her hours—ere the vehicle drove up to the Fens and turned into the garden.

Then, shaking her soft gray dress, and giving a touch to the blue bow at her fair throat, Natalie left the parlour, descending to the portico.

The old housekeeper stood upon the threshold, as if to bar the entrance of the Earl, and her lips were compressed determinedly, and her manner was grim and resolute.

Lord Templecombe, bestowing but a single glance upon her and the grey-robed figure beside her, drove around to the stable, took care of his horse, and then sauntered leisurely to the front of the dwelling, greeting his wife and the old housekeeper with a careless bow.

He ascended the steps in an easy manner, and would have entered the house without a word, but that old Elepeth braced herself, put her arms akimbo, and exclaimed,—

"You can't come in here again, sir, without authority from head-quarters. You may be a lord, and you mayn't, but I can't let you in without orders."

"Faithful old creature," said his lordship, regretting that she could not hear his eulogium upon her. "If you want orders, there they are!"

He drew from his pocket a letter which he quietly handed the old woman.

Her countenance changed on observing the seal, which represented the union of the Wilton and Werner arms, and still farther changed on perusing the contents of the letter.

It was a sharp reprimand from the Baronet for her absurd over-fidelity, and demanded if she could see no difference between a nobleman like the Earl of Templecombe and the thieving tramps against whom his orders had been issued. It concluded by commanding her to show the utmost respect and attention to his lordship and his lady, and to consider them, during their stay, as the legal owners and proprietors of the Fens.

The old woman read it quite through, while the Earl was wiping his damp brows, and, when she had finished it, cried,—

"I beg your pardon, my lord and my lady. I was only obeying orders, which I hope you'll forgive, seeing I didn't know what else to do. I don't see how I could have made such a mistake, I'm sure. I'll try to make amends!"

Her tone of distress touched Natalie, who glanced at her husband to see what response he would make.

But his lordship turned his back upon her, gazing with apparent interest in the direction of the marsh.

The old woman, alarmed at this token of implacability, and dreading her master's wrath, continued to plead her excuses and regrets, until her young mistress extended her hand as a sign of forgiveness.

And then old Elepeth, her equanimity restored, retired to her room, muttering garrulously to Linnet, who accompanied her.

When they had retired, Natalie drew nearer her husband, who still appeared absorbed in contemplating the Fens, and said, timidly,—

"Elmer, have you nothing to say to me?"

"I have much to say to you, madam," he answered, turning on his heel. "You will please lead the way to the drawing-room, as I do not find this air pleasant!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

What need I fear of thee?
But yet I'll make assurance doubly sure,
And take a bond of fate: thou shalt not live;
That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,
And sleep in spite of thunder.

Shakespeare.

It trembled on the young wife's tongue to inform the Earl that the air was equally unpleasant to her, yet that she had endured it at his command; but she conquered herself, and conducted him upstairs in silence.

The Earl observed with satisfaction how languid were her movements, and, after entering the drawing-room, he regarded her face more closely.

It had lost nothing of its beauty, but had acquired a delicacy that testified that something was surely sapping her life at its foundations. Her blue eyes had an unnatural lustre, her cheeks were deathly pale, save where stained with a scarlet flush, and the purple veins showed distinctly upon her temples through the more than ever transparent skin.

Convinced that a farther residence of a few weeks at the Fens would utterly wreck her young life, the Earl determined that she should remain there.

His manner, however, was not in the least conciliatory as he closed the drawing-room door behind them, and said, harshly,—

"Be kind enough to inform me, madam, what you meant by your threatening letter of a week since."

"I meant what I said," answered the young wife, plucking up spirit. "Had I not reason to threaten you? Have you treated me well? Oh, Elmer, Elmer!"

Her voice broke down in sobs.

There had been a time—in those early days at the cottage near Afton Grange—when Natalie's sobs would have been hushed on her husband's breast, and her tears been wiped away with kisses; but that time was for ever past.

Her tears now annoyed and irritated the Earl, and he said, impatiently,—

"Do be sensible, Natalie. No one has ill-treated you. Your duty is obedience to your husband—blind, unquestioning obedience—and I shall be satisfied with nothing less! I should not have answered your ill-judged letter, or come near you at all, if I had expected to find you in this mood. I delayed coming until to-day, simply to teach you that I am your master as well as husband, and I expected to find you in a proper state of penitence for having ventured to threaten me!"

Natalie was astonished at the attitude taken by the Earl, and her eyes flashed with indignation, as she answered,—

"It is you who should be penitent, Vane Templecombe! It is unnatural that I should rebel at the treatment you have bestowed upon me? I am willing to yield a proper obedience to your wishes and commands, but I can only do so as an acknowledged wife."

"You will be acknowledged in good time, Natalie. You require considerable study—"

The young wife interrupted him by a gesture.

"Study!" she repeated, scornfully. "I have lain aside those stupid books never to look into them again. I know it is not necessary that I should study college-books to fit myself to enter society even as Lady Templecombe. Do not tell me that it is, for my common sense has awakened at last, and the time would be wasted. I am willing to learn all womanly accomplishments, though," she added, her voice softening, "if you will supply me with an instructress."

"I intended doing so, Natalie, but I have been greatly occupied, and, besides, I have not found a lady suitable for the position!"

"That is because you have not tried!"

The Earl flushed uneasily, and responded,—

"It shall be my first care to do so when I leave you. Within a week a governess shall be domiciled at the Fens."

"She will find it exceedingly lonely here," interposed the young wife, ironically, "for I shall not be here, and old Elepeth and her granddaughter might not be deemed pleasant companions."

"You will not be here?"

"Certainly not," and Natalie arched her brows in affected surprise. "Can you wish me to remain here, Elmer, when you see how thin I am grown? I have a constant head-

ache, too, and a dread of illness. This air is laden with disease."

"Fancy! mere fancy!" cried her husband. "Such as would better become a nervous middle aged invalid than a healthy young country girl like yourself!"

"Have you noticed no change in my appearance?"

To this direct demand the Earl replied evasively, and finished by expressing his surprise that Natalie should have yielded to such fancies.

"I never used to have 'nervous fancies,'" replied the wife, sadly. "Before I came here I was healthy enough. Why, Elmer, the air here is so pestilential that nearly all the inmates of the Fens have died young. You cannot wish me to remain under such circumstances—unless you wish me dead!"

She looked at him keenly as she uttered the last sentence, and his guilty flush gave her a terrible pang.

"I am surprised at you, Natalie," said the Earl. "I can hardly believe that you are the submissive wife I brought to this place. Such conduct as yours can only injure your cause, for it depends entirely upon yourself whether I ever recognize you or not!"

"You have not acted in good faith with me, Elmer. You pretended that you owned the Fens, when you did not. You placed me in a false position at the outset, and I might have been turned out upon the moor any night by old Elsteth, who, in expelling me, would have but been obeying her master's orders. If you had loved me, how could you have treated me in such a manner?"

"I own that I was thoughtless, Natalie," remarked the Earl, soothingly. "The truth is, I borrowed this place of an intimate friend, to whom I confessed our secret marriage, and he urged me to bring you here, the spot being so secluded. I passed it off as my own, thinking you would be better contented here. I own frankly that I have done wrong, but I throw myself upon your generosity, Natalie. I have hired the place for a year. For my sake, you will remain, won't you, dearest?"

Natalie replied in the negative.

"I urge you by your wifely love, and your nuptial vows."

"These vows apply equally to yourself. You promised to love and cherish me till death should part us. If I obey you and remain here, that parting will soon come. I must consider my own health. I shall go with you to-day, or, if you refuse to take me, I shall follow you."

The Earl bit his lips and was silent.

He did not wish to farther exasperate his young wife, and he was fully determined that she should remain at the Fens.

"We will let the subject rest awhile, Natalie," he said, after a thoughtful pause. "Let me see how you have improved your time here. Can you play any of the new tunes I sent you?"

The wife replied in the affirmative, and begged him to come up to her room and judge of her improvement.

The invitation was accepted, and they went upstairs together.

With reviving hope, Natalie seated herself at the piano, and played a few simple tunes for his amusement, accompanying them with her voice.

The Earl was pleased, and entreated her to continue, and then his thoughts rambled away upon the difficulties in his path, and the best way to surmount them.

The afternoon wore slowly away, the Earl taking a couple of hours sleep upon his wife's couch, the air making him drowsy, and no decision had been arrived at as to Natalie's future.

The question yet remained open when they descended to the dinner-table, where they were waited upon by the again obsequious will get and garrulous old dame.

(To be continued.)

LETTY'S LOVE STORY.

CHAPTER X.

A WOMAN SCORNED.

LETTICE had in a sense, anticipated the revelation, and yet when it came, she was for the moment, almost stunned.

She hid her face in her hands, and remained silent, overcome by a rush of painful thoughts. Yes, it must all be true, for everything the Baronet said, was confirmed by her remembrance of her mother's life.

"Poor mother! poor mother!" she murmured, below her breath, then, after a little while, she recovered her composure, and turned to Sir Wilfred. "You are wrong in one particular, I was not the child you knew, for I was born after my mother went to Woodside."

"I suspected it," Sir Wilfred returned, "And now my dear, you understand the interest I have taken in you since destiny guided you to my house. That first evening I saw you I was nearly dumbfounded, for you were the very image of what your mother had been twenty years ago."

"And you guessed my identity?"

"I can hardly go so far as that. I knew it might be so, but on the other hand there was the chance of my being the victim of imagination, therefore I determined to watch and wait before I said anything to you about it. But I questioned you closely, and—"

He added, with a bright smile, "you thought me very rude for my pains."

"Not rude!" murmured Lettice, confusedly.

"Well, inquisitive at any rate. Still, your answers told me a good deal, and then I wrote to the Vicar of your native village, and he gave me information which made my suspicions certain. For all these years your mother had been living in that little country place, and you were kept in utter ignorance of your real name. Is that not so?"

Lettice assented.

"But," she added, "I believe my mother intended I should learn the truth after her death, only by some means, her documents got either mislaid or destroyed!" and she narrated to the Baronet how the papers had disappeared from the brass bound desk.

"Poor woman!" Sir Wilfred murmured, more to himself than her, "no wonder her character was spoiled and soured. Believing, as she did, that her husband had not only betrayed her love, but also attempted her life, it was natural enough that she should endeavour to hide her shame, and to bring up her children in ignorance of the evil their father had wrought. I think," he went on, "I should have been inclined to imitate her secrecy, and to have kept you in ignorance of all this myself, but for your engagement to Hubert Ellsmere."

Lettice looked up quickly.

"What has that to do with the matter?"

"Only this—that the cousin from whom he inherited Ellsmere Grange had inflicted a great wrong both on your mother and your father, and it was right you should know it before linking your life with his."

"I do not see that it concerns him," rejoined Lettice, slowly. "He, at least, is innocent. More than that, there is no necessity for him to know the truth. If my father had wronged his family, then it would be my duty to tell him, but as it is it would only pain him to hear the story of Miss Ellsmere's crime and its consequences."

"I agree with you, entirely. People have forgotten the circumstances of the case, though they were in everybody's mouth at the time; and it would serve no purpose to revive all the old scandal. Besides, as you will soon change your name, there is no anxiety for you assuming that of Trevlyan."

Lettice blushed, but she exclaimed, passionately,

"I would never assume it! I have too much sympathy with my poor mother's wrongs, to take any pleasure in claiming to be my father's daughter!"

Sir Wilfred walked to the window and looked out. It had ceased raining, but the trees and shrubs were still dripping with the wet, and the sky was yet low and leaden.

"I think we may venture forth now," he observed, "I daresay when we get back we shall find Ellsmere at the Mount, impatiently expecting our return. Will you come downstairs?"

But Lettice, in a rather broken voice, asked to be allowed to stay where she was, while the Baronet gave instructions for the dog-cart to be brought round. She wanted to be alone for a few minutes in the room where that terrible tragedy had been enacted, which had cast its shadow over her mother's young life, and after Sir Wilfred had left her, she threw herself on her knees, and broke into low sobs.

Then she fell to thinking of Isabel Ellsmere, the proud, passionate beauty, whose love had been her undoing. What a life had been hers, after the death of Otto Trevlyan! It is true, no one had suspected her share in the crime, but its memory must have been ever with her, in that lonely old Grange, with the black veil over her face, which was the outward sign of woe too deep for words.

Moved by an irresistible impulse, Lettice went out-side and looked up at the picture frame with its blotted canvas. She wondered whether it would be possible to trace the outline of the face that had been framed by her father's hand, and then she got a chair, and by dint of standing on it, contrived to lift down the picture, which she took over to the window, so as to get all the light there was to shine upon it.

No, the black paint had done its work too well to permit even the faintest semblance of the features beneath to remain visible, but as the girl would have restored it to its place, she let it drop on the floor of the gallery, with the result that the canvas fell apart from the frame.

Something else fell out, too—a small, blue envelope, sealed with red wax, and covered with thick, filmy layers of dust. It had evidently lain hidden between the picture and the frame, and, but for an accident, might have remained there, undiscovered for another half-century.

Lettice took it up, and looked curiously at the address, but every drop of colour forsook her cheek as she read the superscription.

"This is to be given into the hands of the eldest daughter of the late Otto Trevlyan."

Below these words, was appended the signature. "Isabel Ellsmere."

The eldest daughter of Otto Trevlyan! That was Marcy, and fate, had strangely enough, delivered it straight into the hands of Marcy's sister.

Lucy slipped it into her pocket. She would keep it in trust for its rightful owner.

Then, as she was on the point of leaving the gallery to join Sir Wilfred downstairs she discovered she had left her gloves behind her in the boudoir, and accordingly returned to find them.

On one of the walls was an old-fashioned mirror, grim and dusty, but still capable of giving back reflection, and, as the young girl passed it, she caught sight of her face, and was horrified to discover a great black smear, reaching all down one side of it. She vigorously applied her pocket handkerchief, and then bent forward, quite close to the glass, to see if the obnoxious mark had entirely disappeared.

Slowly her eyes widened into a stony gaze of affright. Her heart stood still. Her tongue seemed paralyzed, for there behind her, looking over her shoulder, was another face given back with bleared distinctness by the mirror, a white, dreadful face, with a gash of scarlet round the throat.

Lettice's nerves had already been tried pretty severely by the strain of the afternoon's

events, and now they gave way entirely. Uttering a loud scream, she covered her face with her hands, and ran from the room, not daring to look back until she had reached the end of the corridor, where she was met by Sir Wilfred, who looked considerably startled as he noticed her frightened demeanour.

"My dear child, what is the matter with you? What has happened?" he asked, anxiously; but in reply, the girl only claimed, incoherently,—

"Let us get out of this house, Sir Wilfred! Oh! let us get away from it! The very air of the place seems to stifle me! Nothing in the world shall induce me to enter it again!"

The Baronet prudently refrained from asking any more questions, and having wrapped her cloak round her, led her outside where the dog cart was waiting for them.

After helping her in, he took his seat beside her, and whipped the horse pretty smartly; but though he glanced several times down at his silent companion, he made no remark, and home was reached without either having spoken a word.

As Sir Wilfred had surmised, Hubert was at The Mount, and it chanced that as the dog cart drove up to the great entrance, he and Lady Alicia were in the hall, playing billiards.

Greatly to my lady's wrath, the young man put down his cue, and hurried forward to help his *fiancée* down from her high perch.

"My darling!" he contrived to whisper, as he held her in his arms for a moment—but only for a moment, for Lady Alicia's sharp eyes were upon him, and Lettice was not even in the mood for her lover's endearments. All she wanted was to get away into her own room, and try and recover her calmness, which the afternoon's events had so rudely shaken.

"Why, what have you been doing to your favourite, the governess?" asked my lady, in her low, *traînante* voice, that at this moment possessed a decidedly bitter-sweet inflection. "She looked quite pale and agitated."

"I expect the storm has given her a headache," the Baronet answered, but with some slight uneasiness in his manner. Then he turned to Ellesmere. "We took shelter in your house for an hour or so."

"Did you?" eagerly. "By Jove! I am sorry I was not there to receive you. What did Let—Miss Rofford think of the Grange?"

A queer expression came in Sir Wilfred's eyes.

"I don't fancy she altogether admired it; but, doubtless, she will give you her opinion later on. I never saw it look much gloomier than it did to-day."

"It is a beastly dismal old hole!" exclaimed Hubert, with energy, "and I am getting tired of it myself. I don't believe I shall ever make up my mind to live there—neat of my ancestors though it may be."

"Well, if I were you I really think I should sell it," observed the Baronet, as he sauntered away to inflict himself into drier clothes.

"Shall I tell you what would make all the difference in the world to the Grange?" softly said Lady Alicia, when she and the young man were once more alone.

He turned to her with his bright smile. Hubert was very deeply in love with Lettice, but at the same time he was not quite proof against the subtle flattery that his hostess contrived to infuse into her manner when she spoke to him.

"Pray tell me. I shall be charmed to adopt your suggestion."

"Well, then—a woman's presence!"

"Exactly my own opinion, Lady Alicia! But, perhaps, I might have a difficulty in making the one woman share it!"

Lady Alicia flashed a rapid glance at him from under her artificially darkened lashes. She had, of course, no idea that any serious relations existed between him and Lettice, though she suspected a flirtation.

But then, all young men like flirting with pretty girls, and especially pretty governesses!

"If the woman loved you her pleasure

would be to fall in with your wishes," she murmured, softly, and with a drooping of her eyelids.

Hubert laughed, and took up his cue again. He was much too 'ente to be led out of his depths by pretty little Lady Alicia Aldham.

"Shall we go on with our game?"

"No," shrugging her shoulders, "I am tired of it. Besides, it is cold down here—the rain has chilled the atmosphere. I have had a fire lighted in my own sitting room, and—with a charming smile, and a dainty pink-tipped finger uplifted—"if you promise to be very good, and thus show your appreciation of the honour conferred upon you, I will take you up there and give you your tea."

Hubert made the required promise, as he saw no chance of exchanging a word with Lettice unless Lady Alicia chose to invite him to dinner—and to have tea with her was the most certain way of obtaining the coveted invitation.

And so he sat in the dainty boudoir, with its apricot silk walls, its many vases of cut flowers, which made the air sweet and heavy, its tall palms, and its hundred delicate little feminine nic-nacs, while Lady Alicia, shading her face from the firelight with a fan of peacock feathers, watched him furtively as she gave utterance to little commonplaces that were meant to disguise her real sentiments.

For this fair *petite* patrician lady had a very serious purpose in inviting Ellesmere to a *tête à tête* interview—and it was nothing more or less than to make him propose to her.

Any penchant of his for the governess must be nipped in the bud. If Lady Alicia had dared indeed she would have given Miss Rofford her *congé* at once, but against this Sir Wilfred would assuredly have something to say, and he was not a man who could be defied with impunity.

Lady Alicia would have been very loath for a new Lady Aldham to take from her the dominion of Aldham Mount, but she would have been glad enough to exchange it for that of Ellesmere Grange!

Afterwards Hubert had only a hazy idea of what happened at that four o'clock tea. He knew that Lady Alicia somehow got him to talk in a sentimental strain—which was not unnatural, seeing that his mind was entirely filled with the thought of Lettice.

But while he was thinking of Lettice, Lady Alicia was thinking of herself, and then, yielding to a sudden mad impulse—not so mad but what it was premeditated—the fair-haired *châtelaine* threw herself into his arms, and sobbed out her love on his shoulder.

Poor Ellesmere! He would willingly have given a thousand pounds at that minute to extricate himself from a horribly awkward position.

As gently as possible, but still firmly, he withdrew himself from her clinging arms, and then he told her that he was already betrothed—for, under the circumstances, it was impossible to keep his engagement secret.

Lady Alicia sprang back to her own side of the fireplace, her thin lips making a scarlet line in their close setting, her light eyes gleaming like unsheathed steel.

"Betrothed—to whom?" she demanded, imperiously, and when Hubert, after a slight hesitation, pronounced Lettice's name she burst into a loud, scornful laugh. "To the governess! I congratulate you, Mr. Ellesmere. I wish you joy of your future wife. And now leave me!"

It was a command Hubert was only too delighted to obey, but it was well for him he did not see the expression on Lady Alicia's face as the door closed behind him. Hate, scorn, humiliation, and a wild desire for vengeance—all were there, and as she paced fiercely backwards and forwards on the carpet she tore her delicate lace-edged handkerchief into ribbons.

"So he has chosen between us, and she is the victor. That shit of a girl to whom I pay a hundred a year for teaching my children!" she muttered between her clenched teeth.

"Oh, it is horrible, degrading; and to think that I let him see I cared for him!" She wrung her hands wildly. She had played a bold game and lost; "No!" she exclaimed, suddenly, "it is not lost yet. Surely I can, at least, revenge myself for the insult he has put upon me. If he does not marry me, he shall not marry that hateful girl! Strange, from the very first I disliked her! Instinct warned me that she would cross my path. But let her beware! She will find I am not an enemy to be despised!"

Poor Lettice! Her fair face was destined to bring her many troubles.

CHAPTER XI.

PREPARING FOR THE WEDDINGS.

The next morning while Lettice was giving the children lessons in the schoolroom, Sir Wilfred came in, and sending his little niece and nephew to play in the garden, seated himself by our heroine, and asked her if she had thought over the events of yesterday.

"I have done nothing else but think over them," she returned, with a faint smile.

"And you are still of opinion that it will be best to keep the story from Hubert Ellesmere?"

"Yes, for it would only pain him to hear it. It is not as if any disgrace lay on me. In that case I should think it my duty to reveal everything; but, as it is, matters are much better left alone!"

"Very well. Then your engagement had better be announced without delay, and you must let me play the part of father to you," he added, kindly. "Remember, your own father was at one time my dearest friend, and it will be a great pleasure to me to do anything I can for his child. You shall be married from The Mount, at the same time as Miss Winter, and you will allow me to make you a present of your trousseau?"

Lettice attempted some remonstrance, but an expression of such pain came on Sir Wilfred's face that she ceased immediately. After all, it would be ungracious to refuse his offered kindness.

"Very well, my dear, then that is settled," said the Baronet, patting her hand in a paternal fashion, "and now I will go and break the news to my sister-in-law!"

After he left her Lettice sat trembling with a vague expectation, and yet she was very happy, wildly, deliriously happy in Hubert's love. If only Marcia were here to share her joy.

Her musings were put an end to by the entrance of Lady Alicia attired in a white cambric morning dress, trimmed with the softest and finest of Valenciennes lace, and bows of pale blue ribbon that contrasted charmingly with her pink and white complexion.

"Let me congratulate you, dear Miss Rofford," she said, sweetly, holding forth one small white hand, that even now flashed with gems. "My brother-in-law has just been telling me of your engagement, and speedy marriage. I revel in weddings. You must allow me to help you in getting your trousseau, and I hope you will look upon me as a friend!"

Lettice was amazed at this change of front, and at first inclined to respond rather coldly to Lady Alicia's advances. She could not understand such a sudden friendliness, but as the days went on, and my lady still continued to shower upon her every kind of affectionate attention, she came to the conclusion that she had misjudged the pretty little woman, and that Lady Alicia was really possessed of a warm heart under her frivolous exterior.

Hubert, too, was slightly astonished, but infinitely delighted that things had adjusted themselves comfortably.

He supposed Lady Alicia's caprice for him—she had died a natural death under the shock

of his words, and he was very grateful to her for her subsequent behaviour.

"We all make mistakes sometimes," she said to him, significantly; "but the best thing we can do to retrieve them is to forget them altogether."

"I quite agree. For my part they bury themselves in oblivion," he answered in the same tone, and she knew this was a tacit promise that her indiscretion would be kept a profound secret between them.

The young man added his entreaties to Sir Wilfred's that Lettice would fix the same wedding day as Violet's, and she consented. He was at The Mount every day now, and Lady Alicia arranged that the children should have their lessons quite early, and then be delivered over to the French maid, so as to leave their governess free for the rest of the day.

This was only one example of her thoughtful kindness. Even Violet Winter, who had become quite intimate with Lettice since her engagement, was less affectionate in her manner than Lady Alicia.

But, perhaps, that was because Violet herself was not in good spirits. As her wedding day drew near she grew paler and quieter, and spent more of her time in her own room.

Sir Wilfred watched her with anxious attention, but consoled himself with the reflection that all girls become subdued just before the great event of their life is to take place.

That was indeed a happy time for Lettice—a time on which she looked back in the miserable after years with passionate regret. Very often, Hubert drove her out, and sometimes they would wander about the grounds of The Mount, making plans for the future with the delightful confidence of young love.

"How is it you won't come over and see the Grange?" he asked, playfully, one afternoon, when he and she were sitting together under the shade of a walnut tree, well out of view of The Mount windows.

She coloured rather guiltily, and began picking to pieces a rose she took from her belt. "I believe," continued the young man, laughing, and possessing himself of her hand, rose and all, "you must have seen a ghost that afternoon you took shelter there!"

"I believe I did!" she returned, gravely, but she did not give any further explanation of her words. "The fact is I took a prejudice against the house. It looked so gloomy and desolate that the very remembrance of it makes me shiver!"

"Then, I suppose, you will decline to live there after we are married?"

"That will be as you like. If you wish me to do so, of course I shall," she answered, sweetly.

He bent down and kissed the slim, white hands as they lay in his.

"I shall never attempt to persuade you of anything that you don't like, my darling! We will live in London for a little while after we are married, and then we can look about for another country residence."

"Shall you sell the Grange?"

"Oh, no! It has been the seat of my family for so many years that I should hate the idea of its passing into a stranger's hands. Do you know, Letty, I am very proud of my name, and my estates. For three hundred years there have been Ellesmers of Ellesmere, and ever since my babyhood I have been taught to regard myself as the last representative of the old name, and future owner of the estates. It would almost break my heart if I had to part with them; but, of course, that is impossible!" he added, breaking off with a short laugh.

Presently he continued,—

"The estates are not entailed—and that is a mistake. All big properties ought to pass from father to son. If Miss Ellesmere had wished she could have left everything away from me—and, by Jove! sometimes the idea

flashed across me that it was quite on the cards she might do so. She resolutely refused to see me, and no sort of communications ever passed between us—perhaps she hated me because I was her heir."

There was a short silence—the subject was one on which Lettice dared not allow herself to speak. Sometimes she wished Hubert knew everything, and yet on the other hand, she was aware how the knowledge would gall him.

When the young girl was dressing for dinner that night—for she dined with the family every day now—she went to a small box where she kept all her little articles of value—letters, photographs, and such few ornaments as she possessed. She wanted to find a small pearl brooch, which she perfectly well remembered to have placed in the left hand corner of the box. To her surprise it was not there, but, after a little rummaging, she discovered it entangled in some lace that had been her mother's, and that was on the right hand side of the box.

Lettice was puzzled and a little startled, for the conviction forced itself upon her, that someone had been meddling with her things. Yes, she was sure of it, for two or three articles in the drawer, in which the box was kept, were disarranged. The curious part of it was that both drawer and box were locked, and the key had never left her pocket, so that the unknown investigator must have gone to the trouble of procuring a skeleton key in order to open the locks.

Her trunk, too, had been searched, but it was by no ordinary thief, for not a single thing was missing.

Disturbed she certainly was, but she made no mention of the occurrence downstairs. Doubtless one of the servants had been indulging a vulgar curiosity, in the hope, perhaps, of reading Hubert's love letters.

The next day Lady Alicia announced her intention of going to London to order some of the necessary things for the double wedding.

"You can come with me if you like!" she said, nodding to Violet and Lettice, but they neither of them availed themselves of the invitation, as perhaps my lady had foreseen.

"I prefer to do all my shopping through the post," observed Miss Winter, languidly. "It is much less trouble, and equally satisfactory. Shops are so horribly tiring!"

"I have never been in a big shop in my life!" said Lettice, smiling. "I often wonder what they are like?"

"You had better go to town with Lady Alicia then, and see!"

"She will have plenty of opportunities after she is married!" laughed Lady Alicia. "I believe Hubert is going to take her to Paris first—that terrestrial paradise of shops!"

"For my part, I like the London shops infinitely better," observed Violet, carelessly.

"That is because you pride yourself on being English to the backbone. Now, I don't pretend to be patriotic, and therefore I have no hesitation in giving France the palm. However, I am willing to execute any commissions in London for either of you," nodding to the two brides elect.

Lettice had no commission to give. Sir Wilfred had tendered her a cheque for five hundred pounds, but she had been so startled at the amount that he had laughingly taken it back, and placed it in the hands of his sister-in-law with instructions that she should expend it on the young girl's trousseau as she thought best.

Lady Alicia had undertaken the commission with the airiest good humour, and had had patterns without number down from all the big shops.

Lettice said to her once.

"I am sure I don't know what I have done to deserve your kindness!"

Lady Alicia looked at her rather keenly.

"That is just the point," she returned, with an enigmatical smile. "You have done a great deal more than you know, and all the

kindness it is in my power to show you would not require it!"

Of course, Lettice failed to see the point of this remark, but she put the failure down to her own stupidity.

Things went on just as usual, during the absence of the lady of the house, but the day before she was expected home, an incident happened that made Lettice very uncomfortable.

She had gone up to Miss Winter's dressing-room, and knocked at the door, but finding no answer given, she opened it, and peeped in to see whether Violet was there.

Yes, before a chair, her arms lying across the cushions, and her head resting upon them, in an attitude of profoundest misery, the young girl was kneeling. Her face was hidden, but deep sobs broke from her lips, sobs so full of anguish, that Lettice's heart was stirred to its depths with pity.

Kneeling down by Violet's side, she drew her head on her shoulder, whispering the while, all the soothing consolations she could think of. That it was no ordinary sorrow which was pressing on her companion she knew, but she did not trouble her with questions, until she had grown calmer. Then she said,—

"Have you had any bad news?"

Violet shook her head. Usually calm and self-contained she had for once broken down, and the need for sympathy was strong within her.

"No, but I am very unhappy. So unhappy that I wish I could die!"

"You wish to die. You, who in a few weeks' time will be a bride!" repeated Lettice, in amazement.

Violet drew her breath sharply, and clenched her hands together.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, involuntarily. "If I were only going into a convent, instead of to the altar!"

Lettice was silent for a few seconds from sheer surprise. She still held the small, cold hands, and was caressing them gently.

"But if you feel like this, why don't you break off your engagement?" she asked, at length.

"Because I dare not. Because whatever happens I must keep my secret!" was the incoherent reply, and once more Violet broke into a storm of sobs.

Presently she dried her eyes, and made one supreme effort to recover her self-control.

"There!" she said, with a faint smile, "I am better now. All right, in fact, and I shan't offend in this way again. I suppose we all take leave of our senses occasionally, and we are not quite answerable for what we say at such insane intervals. Forget my foolishness, Letty dear, and believe me it was only a passing caprice!"

"But Miss Winter, if this marriage is distasteful to you, pray—pray don't allow it to take place!" exclaimed Lettice, earnestly.

Violet made a gesture of impatience.

"But it is not distasteful to me. I wish to marry Captain Aldham. I will marry him! You don't understand!"

And then she said she desired to be alone, and Lettice went away, confessing that she did not understand.

Puzzling her brain over the matter, she at last came to the conclusion that Violet must be in love with Reginald, while she doubted his own love for her. Poor girl! This would at once explain her misery, and her desire, at all hazards to become his wife.

The next day Lady Alicia came back, and the preparations for the double wedding were hurried on. Never had Lady Alicia been so bright, so gay, so amiable. Unfortunately, two days after her return home, she had a letter from her only brother, who was at Nîmes, telling her he was ill and in trouble, and begging her to go to him.

"How can I go?" she exclaimed, piteously. To Hubert, who chanced to be out in the garden when she was reading the letter. "There is so much to be done at home just

now, and neither of the two girls have sufficient experience to direct affairs properly. And yet I can't bear the idea of poor Ernest being there all by himself! No doubt he has been getting into debts, gambling at that horrid place Monte Carlo, and he wants me to put him straight. What can I do?"

Her distress was so great that Hubert's heart was moved to pity. He knew Ernest Molyneux's little, and calling to mind the fact that after all Lady Alicia had behaved extremely well since that unfortunate scene in the boudoir, he decided to sacrifice himself in her service.

"Look here, Lady Alicia, let me go for you. If Ernest is really seriously ill I can wire for you to come but if it is only a money difficulty, why, I dare say we can put it right without giving you the trouble of the journey."

"You! It is awfully good of you to propose it, but I really don't think I have any right to take advantage of your kindness."

"There is no special kindness involved. Of course I shan't like leaving Lettice, but I can be back within a week; besides, you have been so good, you know, that I should like to do something for you in return!"

Lady Alicia continued to demur a little, but finally allowed herself to be overruled, and it was arranged that Eillesmere should start for Nice the following day.

"I will travel up to town with you," observed Sir Wilfred on hearing of the plan. "You are certainly very chivalrous to undertake such a journey at this special time and I'm afraid that young Ernest Molyneux, is likely to give you a considerable amount of trouble. There never was such a fellow in the world for getting into messes, and calling on other people to get him out! He's the most self-sufficient, ungrateful rascal in existence!"

Hubert laughed.

"Don't be too hard on him Sir Wilfred! He's very young yet, and he may improve."

"No, he! What a breed in the brute—you know the rest. Heaven knows I have done enough for him, but the last affair was too disgraceful, and, as I told him, I washed my hands of him for good and all. If it were not for breaking my word, I would offer to go to Nice myself, although I confess it would be very awkward for me to get away just now. However, as I said before, I'll come to London with you, because I want to get some family jewels ready for Violet in time for her wedding."

Of course, Hubert spent the whole of the last day at The Mount, and Lady Alicia graciously allowed him to entirely monopolise Lettice.

After dinner the two young lovers wandered out into the grounds, which were bathed in the soft yellow light of the lingering sunsets, and fragrant with the breath of mignonette and late blossoming roses.

Lettice looked her loveliest, dressed in some soft white transparent material, through which her neck and arms gleamed like polished marble with a roseate flush upon it. She was rather pale, and her eyes were misted over with unshed tears.

"Don't look so sad, darling," whispered Hubert, tenderly, stooping down to kiss the soft fairness of the rounded cheek. "I am not going to leave you for long—only a week, seven short days, and I shall be with you again!"

"But the days will not be short!" she responded, trying to smile—though her lips quivered. "I don't want to make you wistful, but I really think there will be forty-eight hours instead of twenty-four in every day that passes till you come back."

"And I shall be thinking of you all the time!" he went on, consolingly. "Picturing what you are doing, and how you are looking. I am quite sure that I shall not see a face half so lovely as yours wherever I may go!"

"Foolster!" holding up her finger archly. "I have heard it said that love laughs at lover's prejudices, and if that is so, you must

have made him a good deal of sport already. But I suppose women ought not to believe one quarter of the pretty things men say to them."

"That's just where you are wrong, Lettice. I don't profess to be eloquent—I leave that to Reginald Aldham—but I can't put into words one tithe of the loving thoughts that crowd my heart. Oh! darling, how poor and cold and grey the world would be without love! I never realised what happiness meant until I met you!"

Lettice looked up with a radiant smile, then her face grew shadowed, and she drooped her eyes again.

"Do you know what Lady Alicia was saying this afternoon?" she questioned, falteringly.

Hubert shook his head, but he looked in the very slightest degree startled. The mention of Lady Alicia was not in itself reassuring.

"What did she say?"

"That no man ever married his first love—that before a man is five-and-twenty he has had at least one *grande passion*!"

"Well?"

Lettice was silent for a moment, then she said half-shyly, half-questioningly,—

"You were over five-and-twenty, Hubert, before you met me?"

The young man laughed, and pinched her cheek.

"You silly little puss! You thought you would catch me that way, did you?" Then, more seriously, "Lady Alicia is wrong. I won't deny that I have had fancies, and once I thought myself in love. But I was mistaken. I can honestly say that I never really cared for a woman until I met you."

"And that once, Hubert?"

His face grew graver, and there came a certain embarrassment in his manner.

"Don't ask me about it, darling. It is all over now, and let it be all forgotten. It would do no good to rake up the ashes."

"But confession is good for the soul," she persisted, stung by some new-born jealousy which Lady Alicia's words had fanned into life.

"Not in this case. Indeed, you are the last person in the world to whom I could make the confession."

There was a certain finality in his tone that warned her against pressuring the subject, and with an effort she threw from her all that savoured of suspicion of him.

By this time the last gleam of sunset had died out of the west, and the star blossoms had come out in the great blue garden of the sky. The outlines of trees and shrubs were sharply and yet delicately pencilled against the still atmosphere, and the vague but delicious spell of the August evening lay like an actual presence over everything.

"It is the hour when from the boughs
The nightingale's high note is heard,
It is the hour when lovers vows
Sound sweet in every whispered word,
And gentle winds and waters near
Make music to the lonely ear.
Each flower the dew has lightly wet,
And in the sky the stars are met,
And on the wave is deeper blue,
And on the leaf a browner hue,
And in the Heaven, that clear obscure,
So softly dark and darkly pure,
That heralds the decline of day,
As twilight melts beneath the moon away."

Hubert quoted the words very softly, and as he finished a sudden shrill hooting cleft the silence.

Lettice sprang to her feet, pale and trembling, and then threw herself into the young man's arms in a paroxysm of terror.

"Why, Lettice—it is only an owl. There is nothing to fear, sweetheart!" he exclaimed, soothing her as if she had been a startled child. "How you tremble! Have you never heard an owl hoot before?"

"It is not that I—" she responded, presently,

in a very low voice, "but the sound seemed to me like an evil omen."

"An omen of what?"

"Of something that will come between you and me and part us!"

"Nonsense, darling! What could part us?"

"I don't know," she returned, wearily, "but the fear has lain upon me, like a heavy weight ever since I heard of this projected journey of yours, and all in a moment it seemed to take shape."

"If you wish me to, I will give the journey up," he began, anxiously, but she interrupted him at once.

"No, no! you shall do nothing of the kind. You have promised to go, and you must keep your word. I know I am very foolish," with a pale smile, "and in a day or two, I dare say, I shall be able to laugh at my own absurdity. Of course, it is only fancy. What more can it be?"

But all the same, when, a little later, they wished each other good-bye! she clung to him with a sort of desolation of regret, for which she could not account.

"I feel as if I were bidding you farewell for all eternity," she whispered, brokenly. "Oh, my love, my love!"

He strained her tightly to his breast, too moved and agitated to reply, and then in silence they parted, under the veiled radiance of the stars, and with the night wind slipping mysteriously through the branches above their heads. All unconscious of the fate whose shadow, even now was upon them, little thinking of the chances and changes that must happen ere they set eyes on each other again.

CHAPTER XII.

NEWS OF MARCIA.

The day following Eillesmere's departure, Lady Alicia came into the schoolroom while Lettice was giving the children their lessons, and graciously informed the latter that they might have a holiday.

"Ah, mamma, what a dear sweet mammy you are!" cried her offspring, jumping up with the intention of bestowing upon her a caress—an intention that Lady Alicia at once frustrated.

"There, there! you needn't dance about me like a couple of wild Indians, and as for kisses, I think I'll wait until you both come out of your bath. That is the only time when I can be sure your lips aren't sticky!"

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed Cellio reproachfully, "you know that isn't true. It's your lips that are always sticky, not ours!"

My lady coloured faintly, and might have bitten her lips, had it not been for the presence of the cosmetic that her small daughter's sharp eyes had detected.

"Really, Miss Rafford, you should teach these children better manners!" she said, tartly. "I believe they get ruder every day!"

Lettice murmured some inaudible reply, and busied herself putting away the lesson books, while Cellio examined, with inquisitive interest, her mother's pretty morning gown of blue cambric and cream lace.

"You look just lovely this morning, mother," she observed, at last, with unconscious diplomacy. "When I die and am made into an angel, I shall always wear a dress like that!"

"You silly!" exclaimed Rupert, with intense scorn, "angels don't wear dresses at all, they only wear wings, and they are made of feathers!"

For a moment Cellio looked disconcerted, then she recovered herself, and nodding her golden head sagely, observed by way of consolation,—

"Well, anyhow I'll have my wings blue!"

Lady Alicia and Lettice both began to laugh, and the little compliment to her own appearance had the effect of putting the former in a good temper again.

"I am going into the garden," she observed to the governess, "will you come with me? The children can go for a walk with nurse."

Lettice assented, and a little while later she and her hostess were busily engaged cutting flowers for the decoration of the dinner table, and snipping off the dead roses with a pair of long pointed scissors.

"Where is Miss Winter?" inquired Lettice, presently. "I have not seen her this morning!"

"Nor I either. She chose to have breakfast in her own room because of a headache, but when I went up half-an-hour ago, she begged me not to go in, a request that I was very glad to comply with. I am not fond of visiting invalids. I always feel so cross with them, don't you?"

"Not if I think they are really ill," responded Lettice, carefully laying a creamy gloire de Dijon in her basket.

"Ah!" said Lady Alicia, with a slightly unpleasant laugh, "you are one of those sympathetic persons whose vocation is nursing. Now, I am nothing of the sort, and what's more, I don't pretend to a virtue that I don't possess!"

"Which is a virtue in itself," put in the young girl, lightly.

Lady Alicia shrugged her shoulders.

"Perhaps so, one of the few to which I can lay claim. No, illness certainly does not appeal to me in the slightest degree. I am never ill myself, and I don't see why other people should be. As for tears, they simply make me cross. If ever you want to beg a favour of me, Miss Rufford, be sure don't cry, or I warn you beforehand, all your chances of success will be discounted!"

"I will remember," smiled Lettice. "But I don't think there is much danger of my annoying you in that way, for I am not given to tears myself. It takes a good deal to make me cry!"

My lady looked at her curiously, and for a minute or two neglected her roses.

"Yes," she said, thoughtfully, while her gaze rested on the steady clearness of the lovely eyes, and then travelled downwards to the firmly modelled chin, with its delicious dimple, "you don't look as if, in an emergency, you would waste time in shedding useless tears. You want to act instead of to weep."

"I don't know," the girl returned, rather dreamily. "We none of us can gauge our own characters, and I suppose they must be left to circumstances to mould."

"You are wrong!" exclaimed her companion, quickly. "It is we who must mould circumstances, man is man and master of his fate, remember!"

"And you claim the same power for woman?"

"Certainly. Don't you?"

"In a lesser degree, perhaps!"

"In a greater degree, you should say. Don't you remember the old Hebrew sage, who said the most powerful thing on earth was a woman. More powerful even than the king, seeing that she could bend him to her will!"

"Then it must be through his weakness!"

Lady Alicia smiled scornfully.

"What does that matter, provided she gets what she wants?"

Lettice did not reply, but went quietly on with her flower cutting. There were times when she shrank away from these glimpses of her own character, which Lady Alicia gave her, for they suggested an unscrupulousness that Lettice did not care to contemplate.

Perhaps, after all, Lady Alicia said a good deal more than she meant. At any rate, it was charitable to suppose she did.

"Don't you think Miss Winter ought to see a doctor?" Lettice said, presently, with a view of changing the conversation. "She has been looking very white and ill lately, and I fancy her nerves are out of order!"

Lady Alicia shot a quick, searching glance at her from under her lids.

"It is nothing much!" she returned, carelessly. "Girls are so fond of giving themselves airs before they are married, and they have a foolish idea, that to be ill is to be interesting!"

"Miss Winter is not at all that sort of girl!" indignantly.

"No, I don't know that she is as a rule, but, of course, this is an exceptional time—within a fortnight of her wedding day! Still, perhaps, it might be as well for a medical man to see her. I will tell Sir Wilfred to ask Dr. Seagrave to call in this afternoon. He is going to ride over to Stanford, to attend a magistrates' meeting."

The Baronet away, and Violet still in her room, Lady Alicia and the governess had a tête-à-tête luncheon, and afterwards they both adjourned to the garden again, where they sat under the shadow of a huge copper beech on the lawn.

"It is too hot to read, or write, or work!" said my lady, with a yawn, while she stretched her arms above her head, and spread out her delicate, diamond-gemmed fingers. "You must stay and bear me company, Miss Rufford, and amuse me!"

Lettice smiled.

"How shall I amuse you, I wonder?"

"Talk to me!"

"Of what?"

"Yourself!"

The young girl coloured a little, and lowered her eyelids.

"Choose some more interesting subject, Lady Alicia!"

"That would be impossible!" retorted my lady, and her listener little guessed how true this was. "I assure you I am extremely interested in you, and have been ever since I knew you were engaged to Hubert Ellersmere!"

"Then, like the moon's, my lustre is a borrowed one," laughed the girl.

"Don't analyse, Miss Rufford, you are a great deal too conscientious, let me tell you. You should accept things as they come, and not attempt to probe below the surface. Now, confess to me, you are very happy?"

"Very happy, indeed!"

"The only cloud on your horizon is your lover's absence?"

"Oh, Lady Alicia, you are too bad!" exclaimed Lettice, covering her face in bashful, but laughing confusion.

"Nonsense! I have been through it all, so I may be supposed to know something about it. Besides, a love story is always new and exciting, even though it may be as old as the hills. That sounds like a paradox, does it not?"

Lettice made no reply, for just then the butler was seen advancing in the direction of the two ladies, bearing a salver, on which lay an orange-coloured envelope.

"A telegram!" exclaimed my lady, reaching out her hand for it.

"It is not for you, my lady," said the man, respectfully. "It is for Miss Rufford."

"For me?" repeated Lettice, in wondering surprise as she took it. "Who can possibly have sent a telegram to me?"

"Hubert, of course!" returned Lady Alicia, and Lettice wondered why she had not immediately guessed that it must be he.

But Lady Alicia was wrong, for the message was not from Ellersmere.

Lettice read it twice over from beginning to end, then the paper dropped from her nerveless fingers, and her face grew deadly pale.

"I hope it is no bad news?" queried Lady Alicia, anxiously, while the butler stood a few paces off, waiting to see if there was any answer.

"It is very bad news, indeed, for it tells me that my sister is dangerously ill," was the low-voiced reply.

"Your sister! I did not know you had one."

Lettice apparently did not hear the remark. She was gazing at the telegram, and trying to

think whether she had better make any sort of explanation to Lady Alicia concerning Marcia, when her ladyship suddenly took up the message and read it aloud.

It was from Tabitha Brown—the old servant at Woodside—and it said, "Telegram just received from Mrs. James Barker, number 135, Guildford-street, saying that Miss Marcia is lying there dying. You must lose no time if you want to see her alive."

"Poor girl!" murmured Lady Alicia, with a considerable amount of sympathy in her tones. "Of course you will go at once?"

Lettice nodded. She could not control her voice sufficiently to speak.

"Then," said her ladyship, rising, "I will answer this while you are getting ready. There is a train leaving Stanford at four-twenty. If you are quick you will catch it. It gets you into Paddington somewhere about eight o'clock or half-past. Simmons"—to the butler—"order the dog-cart to be got ready at once, and let Wilfrid be harnessed to it."

Lettice murmured her thanks, and ran up to her room to put on her travelling attire, and to push into a black leather bag a few articles that she might need during her absence. Hubert—her approaching wedding—everything was forgotten in this new and appalling calamity. Marcia dying—Marcia, her own beautiful lost sister!

When she came downstairs the dog-cart was standing in front of the hall door, and Lady Alicia herself was on the steps.

"Take this," she said, thrusting a small package into her hands. "It is a few sandwiches and a small flask of sherry. You will be hungry before you get to London, for I noticed you did not eat much at luncheon. I have sent off a telegram straight to Guildford street, saying you will come by this train, and asking Mrs. James Barker—wherever she may be—to send someone to Paddington station to meet you."

"You are very good," murmured the girl, huskily. "I don't know how to thank you."

"Nonsense! You have nothing to thank me for. You will write when you have time, and let us know how your sister is? And you need not hurry back if there exists any good reason for your remaining. I will send a line to Hubert to-night, telling him what has occurred."

Lettice hurriedly repeated her thanks, then jumped into the dog-cart, and was driven rapidly away. Lady Alicia watching her until she was out of sight.

The girl's thoughts were in a tumult, and ever afterwards that journey up to London came back to her like a distempered dream. She had only just time to catch the train, and then she lay back in one corner of the carriage while the landscape, in all its plenteous beauty of leaf and blossom, slipped past in a confused haze, and the telegraph wires made waving lines, broken off abruptly by the tall poles that supported them.

The sight of them suggested Tabitha's message, and she put her hand in her pocket to find it, in order to read it over again. But it was not there—and then she remembered that Lady Alicia had not given it back to her.

Never mind! She re-collected the address—135, Guildford-street—and as a matter of fact, the words of the message had also imprinted themselves on her memory. But all the same, it was very careless of her to have left it behind, and she wondered too, that Lady Alicia had not thought of giving it into her hands before she left The Mount.

It was getting dusk when Paddington was reached, and the great gloomy station was full of shadows. To Lettice's unaccustomed eyes it looked bewilderingly vast and confusing, and after leaving the train, she stood for a moment with her hand still resting on the handle of the door, while she gazed round in the faint hope that someone might be there to meet her.

Her hope was not disappointed. A man, tall, slight and dark, passed her, looking at



[LADY ALICIA THREW HERSELF INTO HUBERT'S ARMS, AND SOBBED OUT HER LOVE!]

ber curiously, then turned back, and raised his hat.

"Excuse me," he said, "are you the young lady from Stanhope who we telegraphed to this morning?"

"Yes," eagerly, and yet with some lurking feeling of mistrust, for the man's bold, dark, eyes were fixed on hers with unmistakable admiration. "I am Miss Rafford. How—how is my sister now?"

"Better—much better, and looking forward to seeing you. I have a cab waiting outside to take you to her. By the way, have you any luggage?"

"Only this," indicating the black bag in her hand, which he at once relieved her of. Then he led the way out of the station and put the young girl in a four wheeled cab, into which he jumped after her.

The cabman had apparently had his directions before, for he whipped up his horse, and drove off much more rapidly than might have been expected from the appearance of the quadruped behind which he sat.

Lettice was very silent. She was burning to ask a hundred questions concerning Marcia, but was withheld by some instinct of repugnance to the man at her side. After all, it would be better to wait until she saw Marcia herself, and then she would be able to learn all she longed to know.

This was her first glimpse of London, and at any other time she would have been full of interest in her new surroundings—the busy streets, thronged with people, the brilliant lights in the shop windows, the multitude of vehicles, and the tall, close clustered houses, standing up dark and grim against the sky.

Of course, she had no idea of the distance from Paddington to Guildford-street, but it seemed to her as if she must have been in the cab a long time, and she noticed too that they had left the noisy streets for a much darker and more silent thoroughfare.

"Shall we be long before we reach my sister?" she asked, at length.

"Not very long—ten minutes or so perhaps."

But the ten minutes was a very protracted one, and the road got quieter and more deserted. A vague feeling of apprehension stole over her. Was it possible this man was not really a messenger from Marcia, but some unscrupulous adventurer, whose purpose was to decoy her to some lonely spot, and then rob her of the few valuables she possessed?

Under the influence of this fear, she turned to him, with a sharp question.—

"What is your name? You did not tell it me."

"My name is James Barker, and I am the son of the person who sent you telegram this morning," he responded at once, and in a matter of fact voice that went a long way towards allaying her suspicions.

After a little while, the cab drew up in obedience to an order from the man, who, after paying the cabman, dismissed him.

"The house is just down this turning. We shall be there in less than five minutes. You had better take my arm," said Mr. Barker, and without waiting for her reply, he drew her arm forcibly through his, and hurried her forward until he stopped before a door set in a high wall, above which flickered a dim light.

"Wait!" cried Lettice, breathlessly and incoherently. "I don't like the look of this place! I think there may be some mistake. My sister cannot be here!"

"But she is!" he replied, insistently. "If you listen you may even hear her calling your name, as she was doing when I left. It has been nothing but 'Letty, Letty!' all the day long."

Lettice looked at him doubtfully, but he bore her scrutiny without blanching, though he held her arm firmly, even while he was engaged in fitting a latch key in the lock.

She cast a rapid glance around her. There

was no one in sight, and for aught she could tell, there were no houses within ken either.

Whether her fears were groundless or not, the result would be the same, for escape was cut off, since that strong arm pressed her too securely for her to withdraw it.

Lettice was not given to being nervous. In point of fact, she was far stronger and more self-reliant than ninety-nine girls out of a hundred, and even now, she said to herself, bravely,—

"Of course it is all right! How should this man have known my name, and that of the sender of the telegram if he were not really James Barker? No doubt poor Marcia had very sufficient reasons for hiding herself in this lonely place."

Nevertheless, as the gate closed behind them with a loud clang, and she found herself in a thick shrubbery, through which a winding path apparently led up to the house, her heart began to beat with riotous throbs of apprehension that all her efforts were powerless to dispel.

(To be continued.)

NEW YORK has established a school in which the children of the poor are taught to make and dress dolls. The charge for teaching the system is fifty cents a week. The parents pay this sum, and the little ones bring their own materials. Everything they make, dolls and dresses, are their own, and there are many pupils already earning a living in their spare hours. In the poorest houses there are scraps of flannel, linen, dress goods, and what not, which find their way to the rag bag. These apparently useless bits are taken to school by the children, and converted into dolls and their outfits. It teaches them also the art of dressmaking, as the adult system is only the enlarged doll system.



["YOU HAVE HAD BAD NEWS?" SAID GABRIEL, GENTLY.]

NOVELETTE.

THE MASTER OF THE MILLS.

CHAPTER I.

"My dearest, it is indeed hard to leave you, and for so long a period; but I cannot afford to decline the appointment; it is exceptionally good, and Lord Heneage holds out hopes of something better to follow!"

The girl sighed; there was a wistful look in the lovely grey eyes, and the mouth had a sorrowful curve; but she answered in a low, firm voice,—

"You must go dear. Maurice; and what does it matter how far we are apart when we are so sure each of the other's love? I would not for worlds hold you back. In the years that lie before us, you might reproach me for such selfishness—and no such chance might come again to you. Neglected opportunities never return. Go, dear heart, and, oh! may Heaven bless you in all your ways!"

Maurice Audley took the girl into a close embrace.

"Heaven has already blessed me beyond my deserts," he said, "in giving me, you! Enid, my darling, how shall I bear to leave you? You have made the happiness of all my life—and yet it is for your sake, I go. I never was tempted so much before, to envy the rich!"

She smiled up at him then.—

"I envy no one on earth now," and the light in her lovely eyes gave meaning to her words, "and at no time was I covetous of riches—I am quite content to have enough."

"A woman is not often so ambitious as a man," answered Maurice, "and if I had but a small certain income there is so much I could do. Do you think I should rest content to scribble critiques for any editor who will condescend to accept them? No; I would

devote myself to writing and publishing a novel which should not only bring me fame, but be the stepping-stone to fortune. But I will never sell the copyright of the first-fruits of my brain."

He spoke with all the arrogance of early manhood. With a full and perfect faith in his own powers, which was not perhaps without good foundation. There were those who said Maurice Audley was a genius, and certainly Enid Lovel was willing to believe so.

"Who knows," she said, dreamily, "that this appointment may not give you the means to realise that dream? Oh, Maurice! how proud I should be to hear your name on every lip—to feel that, despite your great, good fortune, you still loved poor, little me, above and beyond all others, and yet, deep down in my heart, I think there would be a trembling fear, lest you should grow weary or ashamed of me!" and then she so clung about him that he kissed her again and again, declaring that, without her, life would go on with broken wing; that she made his world, and was his dearest treasure.

How fast the moments flew! To-night he was to leave her for two long years, and as yet he had scarcely made any preparations for the journey before him. The girl was first to remember this.

"Maurice," she said, gently. "You have much to do; you must stay no longer. It will not do to lose your train after all."

He rose reluctantly.

"I have to pack, of course, and there are one or two little accounts to settle. Enid—I—I did not guess how hard it would be to say good-bye. Even now it rests with you to say whether I go or stay!"

"You must go!" she answered, firmly, although all her heart was clamouring out to her, "Let him stay!" "It is not like you to be weak, and there is a glorious future before you; no don't kiss me again—not now! Don't you know there is a limit to my courage

too?" and she faintly smiled, "You must set me a good example!"

"I suppose so!" sighing, "but, perhaps, even you, sweetheart, do not guess how cruel this parting will be to me!"

Ah! did she not? Did she not by her own sharp pangs? But womanlike, she did not speak of herself.

"You will come up to-night?" she asked, "It is on your way to the station."

"I shall be round at six; my train does not leave until seven: but I'll wish Mrs. Lovel and the youngsters good-bye now. This evening I want you all to myself. You will come down to the gate to meet me?" (with a certain masterful air which became him well, and which Enid so admired), we will say our good-bye there."

"Yes, now let me take you to mamma," she is giving Dot and Teddy a lesson in geography. Poor mites!

She led the way along the broad old-fashioned hall into a large, low, airy room, where sat a middle-aged lady and two children.

"I have come to say goodbye, Mrs. Lovel," announced Maurice. "I am off to-night you know—needs must when somebody, who shall be nameless, drives!"

"Of course it is a great wrench for you," Mrs. Lovel said, sympathetically, "but it is also a splendid opening; and you and Enid are so young you can well afford to wait awhile before thinking of marriage!"

"I am twenty-five, Mrs. Lovel!"

"And Enid nineteen; I should be sorry to see my daughter a wife at such an early age! My dear, fondly as I am attached to you, I would not give her to you yet. When you return she will be a woman—absence will have tested your mutual love—and I shall feel satisfied of your happiness. Now, children, wish Maurice goodbye. It will be a long time before you see him again."

The young man submitted to Dot's kisses

and Teddy's bear-like hugs. He was not very fond of children—and it must be confessed the young Lovel's were rather unruly. He parted with Mrs. Lovel on the friendliest terms, and then went away to his lodgings to complete his preparations, and Enid waited in sick suspense for the last word to be spoken, the last kiss given.

Maurice Audley and she had been lovers now for nine happy months. They had met first at the Rectory where Maurice was assistant-tutor to the many boarders the Reverend Borrowdale received.

The young man's prospects were by no means good: he had nothing to call his own, save that earned by real arduous labour. For, although of gentle birth, he inherited no property, all his little fortune having been spent on his education, and the expenses attending life in a university town. But he wrote clever critiques and articles for popular papers, which added not a little to his income. He was so quiet and steady, led such an irreproachable life, and was so devoted to Enid, that Mrs. Lovel willingly gave consent to their engagement, which, perchance, must be a long one.

His poverty did not frighten the gentle mother. Had not she and Dr. Lovel started life together on the slenderest of incomes? And had they not been so happy that when he died, folks thought she would die too? Had not his untimely death aged and changed her in all things but her deep-rooted charity and unselfishness?

It was for her children only she had struggled through that long and terrible illness following her widowhood. It was to them she devoted herself from first to last. She had a small annuity which maintained the little family in comfort, and Enid, who was decidedly musical, received pupils, and so was no expense. Will, who was seventeen, was in the merchant service, and all the children between him and the ten year old twins had died. Mrs. Lovel never felt the sting of poverty, and the days went pleasantly by at Leafdale Cottage.

But now the mother's heart was sore for her first-born. The gentle, lovesome Enid, who had shared all her joys and sorrows since when a little thoughtful mite of nine she had crept to "mamma's" side and vainly tried to comfort her because "papa" had gone away and they would not see him for such a weary while.

Maurice Audley was going away, and there were those who envied his good fortune.

Through the Rector's influence and his own undoubted fitness for the post he had been appointed travelling tutor and companion to the only son of Lord Hensage—the Honourable Farries Hensage—at a salary of two hundred per annum and all expenses paid.

The young aristocrat was weak and easily led, though not altogether vicious, and his father had dreaded the temptations of university life for him. So at the age of nineteen he had decided to send him on a foreign tour with a tutor who was not too old to share in youthful frolics, and not so young as to engage in any mad escapade.

His choice fell on Maurice, and when the engagement had been ratified his lordship wrote:—

"If you fulfil your somewhat difficult duty (as I have every belief you will) I can promise you a certain and remunerative position when your present engagement closes. In the meanwhile do your best with and for my son, and you will not find me ungrateful."

It was of this promise that Maurice Audley thought as he walked that evening to Leafdale Cottage. The month was March, and under the hedgerows the violets had begun to blossom, and even the primroses showed here and there a pale bud. The willows and alders had little knots along their slender branches, which spoke to any lover of nature of the near future when they, with all the world would break into tender, delicate green.

Over the gate which opened into the Lovels

garden little vivid leaves were shining amongst the darker green of ivy; and under the saffron and pale blue sky, with a white wrap loosely twisted about her head and shoulders, stood Enid.

The evening was cold, with a suspicion of frost, but the girl felt neither wind nor frost as she stretched out her hands to her lover.

"I came as soon as I could," he said, as he entered and put an arm about her. "There was more to do than I thought. Enid, my dear one, my dear one, shall we ever stand together thus again?" And to the trembling girl it seemed a voice sighed through the empty garden. "Never again! never again!"

She clung to him in a passion of pain. She did not seek now to hide how much she loved him, how much she grieved that he must go. Whatever happened in the years before them she would have him remember what he was then to her, and how her heart was all but broken because they needs must part.

"Speak to me!" he whispered. "Speak to me, sweetheart! Let me hear you say again and again, 'I love you!'"

The lovely tearful eyes met his.

"I love you!" she said, simply. "Oh, Maurice! oh, Maurice—what shall I say? How can I bid you think of me, who shall think of and pray for you by night and day? Do not forget me—or if, for your happiness and welfare you do forget—remember I shall not blame you. How could I when I have loved you once?"

"And shall our love not last with our lives?" he asked. "Forgetfulness of you would be impossible. Why will you darken our last moments with such doubts as these? My beloved! my beloved! you are all the world to me!"

With a little satisfied sigh she put up her hand and touched his cheek, then she lifted her face and kissed him once solemnly, as though in kissing she had blest him.

"You will write me often, Enid? You will tell me all that is passing round you? I am such a jealous fellow. I shall be torturing myself lest in my absence some other—worse than I—may steal you from me, my darling! my darling! Don't you think I feel how little I deserve my treasure? But Heaven knows how dearly I prize you, how earnestly I will strive to atone to you for this enforced separation through all the years to come. Kiss me now, and promise to keep faith with me until I return to you—and then, it must be farewell."

She laid her little hands in his, and looked steadfastly into his eyes.

"You, and you alone, shall fill my heart and claim my thoughts. Until you, of your own will and pleasure, cast me aside I will cling to you with all my soul!"

In the depth of his sorrow he laughed that she could for a moment dream he should weary of her; and then he kissed her lips, her cheek, her brow; and, strong man as he was, trembled and grew sick at heart at the thought of all those long, long months when he would hunger and hunger all in vain for the sight of her sweet face, the sound of her low and tender voice.

"Good-bye!" he whispered, hoarsely, again and again, coupling with that one word all endearing epithets; and she, faint and spent with the passion of grief and love consuming her, at last thrust him with gentle hands a little aside.

"Let us part now," she said, "whilst we have strength. I am weak as a child to-night. Do not let me play the coward now. I want to speed you with smiles not tears. Heaven's grace go with you, dear!" and then she slipped from his embracing arms, and he saw her face vaguely through the gathering night—her dear pale face, with the wide, sorrowful eyes and quivering mouth.

Without a word he turned and went his way, not daring to look back once at the lithe young form by the gate.

And when she could see him no longer Enid bowed her head upon her hands, and wept

awhile as though her very heart would break. Then sighing heavily she went back to the house.

Mrs. Lovel met her in the hall.

"He has gone, dear," she said, laying caressing hands upon the girl's shoulders. "Poor child! it is hard for you now to bear, but this separation will only teach each the other's true value, and two years will quickly pass. Besides, there is just a chance Lord Hensage will recall his son to England for a week or two in the course of a few months, and then Maurice will be able to run down to Penneathorne. Now, dear, go to your room—I will come to you presently—and try to rest. It has been a hard day for you!"

And Enid, glad to be alone, obeyed. There by her little white bed she prayed for him whose love was the crowning glory of her life, and passionately entreated Heaven to bring him back to her, to be with him in all his going out and coming in, to bless him with its choicest blessings.

Then she laid down upon her bed, worn by sorrow and weeping. Quite late Mrs. Lovel went into her room.

The girl was lying with her face resting upon her clasped hands, the long dark lashes were wet with tears. The mother stooped, and kissing her cheek lightly, stole away lest she should awaken her.

CHAPTER II.

"ENID, I have a most wonderful piece of news for you," said Mrs. Lovel, about a week after Maurice and his charge had started for Spain, "the old mills are to re-open after twenty years. Men are already at work, and I suppose alterations and repairs are to be carried on most extensively!"

"Oh, dear," said Enid, letting her hands fall upon the book before her, "Penneathorne will sink to the level of a factory town. It is very nice as it is!"

"But all the same it is in anything but a flourishing condition," smiled her mother, "and I suppose the new owner is immensely rich, and very philanthropic. He is going to build model cottages for his 'hands,' each with a nice piece of garden ground. He will pay them well, and their hours will not be long."

"He must be a modern Quixote," said Enid. "Pray what is his name, from whence does he hail (as the Yankees say), is he young or old, and has he yet arrived?"

"I'll try to answer your questions in rotation," laughing. "He is called Gabriel Dandas, he comes from Bristol, he is apparently thirty years old, and at present is lodgings at Mrs. Cornfords. For the rest, he is very tall, six feet two I should say, broad in proportion, with a fine face, and calm, grand eyes. He wears a close-cropped beard and a heavy moustache, and when he speaks he does so in a low, musical voice, which one feels is capable of any and every infliction."

"You have both seen and spoken to this *tau a avis*?" Enid said, a little languidly. "Well, mamma, however much you may be prepossessed in his favour I vow I shall hate him if he spoils our lovely lanes and walks, and turns Penneathorne into a refuge for coarse men and slatternly women. Why could not he take his mills and cottages elsewhere?"

Mrs. Lovel smiled.

"Aren't you a little unreasonable, Enid?"

"Oh," cried precocious Dot, "don't you know Maurice's letter is a post late? and Sissie looked so disappointed when eleven came and old Nobbins never called. I think it must be awful to have sweethearts!"

"I think you had best get your hat and join Teddy in the garden," her mother remarked, severely. "Little girls should be seen but not heard," so Dot went off in high dudgeon, and a pupil arriving. Enid was carried out of herself, and forgot about the letter until the next delivery was due.

Then she ran down to the gate, and old Nobbins, with a friendly smile, handed her a large square envelope.

"Here it is, Miss Enid, and I hope it brings good news. You're looking fine and well" (as the colour mounted to her cheeks), "and I'm pleased to see it. Good evenin', miss."

Then, as he trudged on his way, the girl ran to the little arbour where so many happy hours had been spent, and read and re-read those dear words until they seemed imprinted on heart and brain alike.

Was ever woman so happy in her love as she? Was ever woman so blessed? She asked herself these questions again and again, answering always "no."

She was very, very happy then, and no thought of woe to come crossed her mind or troubled her heart.

Maurice loved her. Ah! then what was there left to desire save his quick return?

She walked down the trim path. It was late in May, and the borders were beautiful with blue-bells, "none so pretty," and a host of early flowers. Above her were the snow-white canopies of ancient hawthornes, the yellow tassels of laburnum, the heavy, sweet blooms of the lilacs.

She drew a deep breath of delight. What a fair world it was! How impossible it seemed that sorrow and sin could find any abiding place here.

Her eyes wandered to the distant mills.

"They will spoil it all," she thought, regretfully. "I shall lose the glimpse of hills beyond, and the horrid smoke will disfigure the whole place. Maurice will hardly recognise it when he returns."

The little gate swung open, a tall, a very tall man stooped beneath the over arching ivy, and came to meet her.

She recognised him at once by her mother's description, and stood in the narrow pathway waiting for him to join her, wondering what could be his errand there.

"I feel myself an intruder," he said, lifting his hat, "but the Rector is suddenly indisposed, and Mrs. Braithwaite asked me to call here for a certain invaluable medicine Mrs. Lovel concocts. She said it would take very little time to prepare."

"Mamma is out, but I know what Mr. Braithwaite requires. I can get it ready, and will take it at once to the Rectory."

"I could not trouble you so far, the Rector would not wish it."

"Jenny (our one maid) is a poor, nervous body, and it is growing dark. I am not afraid. I will take the draught," and she began to move towards the house. But Mr. Dundas accommodating his steps to hers, said,—

"I cannot allow that. Make me your messenger, Miss Lovel."

She looked swiftly up at him. He had a weary look like that of a man who has toiled long hours.

"No," she answered, "I will go. The walk will be good for me, and your way lies in an opposite direction to the Rectory."

"I will wait here until you are ready," Mr. Dundas said, in quiet tones. "There are a number of rough men in Pennethorne just now. I cannot permit you to go alone."

The colour flamed into her face.

"In Pennethorne I have never been insulted! And—pardon me, Mr. Dundas, it is you who are bent upon introducing the rough element!"

There was a strange look in his face, in his grand, majestic eyes, as he answered,—

"The 'rough element' might be rough no longer if some few with large hearts and broad sympathies could be found to lift it from the mire. Miss Lovel, I am waiting for the medicine. If you will go, I must beg you to let me walk with you. Otherwise, I utterly refuse to allow you to leave this garden!"

He spoke with the air of a man accustomed to obedience. And although Enid's heart revolted against his authority without a word, she went back to the house; but she would not invite him to enter. So he waited with

all apparent patience for her return, and presently she came out, bearing a little basket, which he at once took from her.

They walked some few yards in silence, then Gabriel Dundas said,—

"I suppose you, in common with many ladies, regard me as the enemy of Pennethorne?" and he smiled down amusedly at her. "Really, I ought to be aggrieved."

"I don't think the mills will be an improvement!" Enid said, a trifle sharply. "Pennethorne is very nice as it is."

"It is very deadly lively, and property is at a discount. There are houses empty all over the place. I mean to fill them. The place is falling into a state of decay, pittoresque to see."

"Better so, than it should be transformed into a den of wickedness. I dread the advent of your employer."

"Pardon! I don't think you quite understand the 'factory hand,' pure and simple. I grant you the men are often rough and dissolute, the women bold and slatternly; but you've got to consider their training before you condemn them. And under their coarse and rugged exterior often there will beat a heart of gold, a dogged faithfulness, which well might shame us who are more favoured. What they need is sympathy and a firm hand to guide them until they are capable of walking alone."

He spoke with enthusiasm, and her anger against him melted as she looked into his grand face, so indescribably softened now.

"I did not stay to reflect," she said, gently, "and my life has been so quiet, so sheltered, that perhaps I do not sufficiently realise the temptations of those you wish to befriend. Then, too, we are a great deal behind the times here, and do not care for changes; but we shall grow accustomed to them."

"I hope so. And, perhaps, when the mills are finished, you will allow me to show you and Mrs. Lovel over them. Here is the Rectory. I will not go in again, but will wait you here," and Enid went in alone.

She did not stay long, as she found Mr. Braithwaite much better, and she remembered with a sense of shyness that Gabriel Dundas was pacing up and down beyond the gates.

He at least never forgot that homeward walk beneath the clear moonlit sky. Once he paused to gather some crimson may, once to secure a cluster of chestnut blossoms, and he talked in low tones on topics likely to interest his companion.

But though she answered him yes and no, Enid heard little or nothing of his discourse, because in her heart she was repeating again and yet again the loving words Maurice had written.

She did not invite him to enter the little garden, but wished him good-bye at the gate. Mrs. Lovel had returned, and she met Enid in the hall.

"I was starting to meet you," she said. "It is late, and I felt nervous. How is Mr. Braithwaite now?"

"Better. Mamma, I have both seen and talked with your paragon, in fact he left me but a moment since. I agree with you, he is very nice, but I am not reconciled yet to the idea of the mills. I am afraid it will be a very difficult matter to convert me to the belief that Pennethorne will be improved by them. Now, shall we have supper? It is very late."

The work of repairing the mills went on merrily, and beyond them, in the course of erection, were the model cottages. And even Enid was obliged to own they would be pretty places when finished.

Gabriel Dundas was a busy man in those days, superintending personally all the work in hand.

"If you want a thing well done, you must do it yourself," he said, with a quiet smile.

So the drainage and building, the laying out of garden ground went on under his watchful eye, and the progress made was wonderful.

A lovely old-fashioned house called The

Manor was for sale, and he bought that for his own residence.

"I hate new houses," he said to Mr. Braithwaite. "I like a place with old associations clinging about it. The Manor will suit me beautifully, there are so many legends rife about it."

So The Manor was furnished from garret to basement, a staff of servants engaged, and Gabriel Dundas took up residence there.

Next the mills were finished and opened, and the "hands" poured in, and Pennethorne regarded them with something akin to dismay.

It was such a respectable little town, and these people were alien to their ideas of respectability.

The cottages were not yet completed, so the "hands" lodged in the adjacent villages, coming noisily into the town at early morning, leaving noisily at six in the evening.

They were such a careless crew, for the most part good-natured people, fond of horse-play, and practical jokes; full of a sturdy independence, and a strong idea of their own rights. And it was upon such material, Gabriel proposed to work.

He had set aside a portion of the estate for a recreation ground. There was to be cricket for the boys, swings and other amusements for the girls; in the winter he purposed holding night schools and "penny-readings."

And yet, with all this work on hand, he found time to call often at Leafdale Cottage.

He liked talking to the gentle widow, the children amused him, and then—well then, there was Enid to look at. Enid with her sweet flower-like face, her starry eyes, and crown of brown curls and braids. And the oftener he saw her the greater grew his admiration.

She was so loving and patient with those tiresome youngsters, so infinitely, yet unconsciously, tender towards the dear mother. And in all she said and did there was a quiet grace peculiarly her own that appealed to Gabriel, as nothing in any woman had appealed before.

No one dreamed of danger to him, no one thought it necessary to speak of Maurice to him. All Pennethorne knew of Enid's engagement, and all Pennethorne took it for granted the "Master of the Mills" was not ignorant of it.

So he drifted with the stream, and even before he guessed it, his heart had gone from him, and Gabriel was not a man to love lightly, or lightly to forget.

The golden summer came, ripened, and died in the arms of a glorious autumn; the cottages were all but finished, the night school, "spick and span," rose majestically above them, and Pennethorne was growing reconciled to all these changes, and, if the truth must be told, rather enjoyed them. The tradesmen were flourishing as they had not done for long years, and there was not an empty house to be seen. Gabriel was naturally pleased with the reformation he had effected.

"Really," he said, with a laugh, to Enid, "I look on myself as the patron and benefactor of the town! You are not angry with me now for waking Pennethorne from its reprehensible sleep?"

"I am angry still that you have spoiled my prettiest view," she answered with mock gravity, "and now, if one has a longing to escape from bricks and mortar, one must walk so far to do it, that one feels it impossible to penetrate to the country! No, Mr. Dundas, I regard you distinctly as our evil genius," and then she lifted her sweet face to his and laughed, such a low, liquid laugh. "There are times when I am wicked enough to wish all your pretty buildings might fall like the house built upon sand."

"This is very awful," said Gabriel, looking down from his great height. "I had no idea Miss Lovel you were so vindictive. And I had been hoping all along you would help me with my night-schools, and sometimes (as a very great favour) sing at my entertainments.

You have just the sympathetic voice which appeals so powerfully to my poor people, and, at least, you'll be just enough to acknowledge that they have not flagrantly violated any law of the land up to this date."

The gleam of mischief died out of Enid's eyes.

"I was not altogether in earnest," she said, gently, "and I will gladly help you if I can. If you think my singing will please them, I will sing as often as you please; but I should be a failure at the school, I am not clever at all—I should feel just a wee bit like an impostor!"

He looked disappointed.

"You would be a power at the school; there are dozens of the hands who cannot even read. Won't you help me there?"

She hesitated a moment, then she said,—

"I will take those if you wish it."

"I certainly do; and although you may believe it, many of the poor souls are so sensitive they would not acknowledge their ignorance to half my kind volunteer assistants. Miss Braithe is very good and clever, but she rubs them the wrong way—with many, many thanks I leave them in your hands. I propose to have our first reading next Thursday, beginning at seven-thirty. That will give the lads and lasses ample opportunity to make themselves respectable; and during the interval, coffee and biscuits will be served—they will want some inducement to come at first."

"You think of everything," the girl said, a note of admiration in her voice, "and you have your people's welfare so much at heart!"

"I feel responsible for them," he answered gravely, "and I want our first entertainment to be a great success. The church choir will kindly give some glees; Miss Braithe and Mr. Cornford have promised a song each and a duet. You shall give us what you will, and, really, I see no need for you to attend rehearsal!"

"Thank you; and what is to be your contribution to the performance?"

"I am going to give a couple of readings. I don't sing you know, my musical education was sadly neglected," he added, with a smile; "but in time I want to organise a singing class for my folks. It would be a wonderful success!"

They had now reached the gate, and Gabriel pleaded,—

"May I not come in? It is quite early, Miss Lovel!"

"The children have not yet gone to bed, Mr. Dundas, and you always make them troublesome! I must decline to admit you to night!"

"I feel like the Peri shut out from Paradise—a gigantic Peri it is true, so there is all the more room for disappointment in my body!" laughing out then. "Miss Lovel, you have a heart of stone for all your seeming gentleness!"

"Mr. Dundas, I resent your words," she answered, lightly. "Take care I do not punish them by forgetting my engagement to sing on Thursday. I am quite capable of such conduct."

"Towards me! Oh, yes! but you would not treat my people so cruelly!"

"I am not sure! Good-night!" and with a little bow she left him.

CHAPTER III.

The night for Gabriel's entertainment arrived, but Mrs. Lovel was indisposed, so that Enid went alone. Her first song was not until rather late in the evening, and she sat on the platform beside Miss Braithe, listening to the other performers, watching curiously the gaily dressed lasses and lads who had come to see "what sort of 'o fun the master prived."

Gabriel's first reading tickled them immensely, it was the trial scene from 'Pickwick

Papers," and the hearty roars of laughter, which broke out now and again, were sufficient testimony to their enjoyment.

He read with infinite humour, doing justice to the great man whose name shall shine in the page of literature so long as England and an Englishman survives, and when he had finished such a shout of enthusiasm rose that Enid laughed until she was weary, although she felt proud too of her friend's success. Then it was her turn to sing, and trembling a little, she rose, and leaned upon the handrail before her. She had no music, she knew her ballads too well to need it, and she had been careful to choose such as she thought and hoped would please her strange audience.

The sweet, pure voice, rose and fell, and over the people stole a deep hush. It was "The Distant Shore," she sang, and they listened with breathless delight, until the closing words,—

"Be of good cheer, poor heart,
At rest on the distant shore,
Where thou and thy love walk hand in hand,
Ever and ever more!"

Then, oh! what a fury of applause greeted her. She must sing again, they would not let her go.

She was a little pale with emotion, a little afraid of the excitement she had wrought amongst them; but after a momentary hesitation she broke into the pathetic ballad, "The Old Arm Chair," and throwing all her soul into it, forgot her audience, the eager eyes fixed upon her; all save her subject, and came back only to the present when Gabriel taking her hand let her away amidst the cheers of "his people."

Then came the interval. Afterwards the master of the mills read the death scene of Little Nell, and even he, who knew his people well had hardly reckoned upon the effect it would produce upon them.

Women bowed their heads and wept unrestrainedly, men ashamed of such emotion, pulled their caps over their eyes and furtively wiped away their unwanted tears; and when Gabriel made an end, a deep breath passed through the hall, and for a while not a word disturbed the intense silence, and then—well, then, never had such an ovation been heard in Fennethorne; and those who had been afraid Gabriel's choice would be above his employ, in understanding, acknowledged that he held the keynote to their minds and hearts alike.

Altogether this first "reading" was a brilliant success, and when the evening ended, happy but tired, Enid walked homewards beside Gabriel.

Leadale Cottage lay wide of the town and presently they left their companions far behind, and were to all intents and purposes alone, then the girl spoke out of the fulness of her heart.

"You have begun a great and good work, Mr. Dundas."

"Will you help me to carry it on?" he asked, quickly.

For a moment she did not understand, then as her eyes met the shining light in the deep blue ones bent upon her, all her soul melted with pity for his pain, and putting out her little hands with an almost tragic gesture she cried,—

"Oh, hush! oh, hush! Mr. Dundas. I never dreamed of this. I—I—"

"I have frightened you," he said, ever so gently. "I spoke too suddenly, but my love for you is not of sudden growth. From our first meeting my heart has been drawn from me to you, and now, my dear, I give my life into your hands to do as you will with it!"

The drooping face was inexpressibly sad, the lovely eyes were full of tears.

"Has no one told you the truth?" she asked. "I never for a moment supposed you were ignorant of it. Mr. Dundas, I am already engaged!"

The blow was so sudden, so bitter that under the clear moonlight his face showed

white and drawn. He drew his breath hard like one spent with running, and Enid was afraid to look at him.

Then he said in a strange, calm voice,—

"It would have been kinder to have told me this before," and that was his only reproach.

"If I had guessed—if only I had guessed," Enid broke out, "but I never dreamed there was that in me to win your great and noble heart; and now—now I shall lose your friendship, the friendship I have learned to prize. Oh! Mr. Dundas, can you ever forgive me?" and then to his dismay she burst into passionate tears.

The sight of her grief had the effect of restoring his self-control as nothing else could have done.

He took one little cold hand in his, and holding it in a warm, firm clasp, said,—

"Don't do that, Enid. I cannot bear to think I have made you unhappy, and my reproach was unjust. Dear, I have no one to blame but myself. Never by word or look have you given me reason to hope that one day you would come to me, my dear and honoured wife. All the fault is mine, as I hope all the pain may be, and for the rest, we may still be friends if you will forget and forgive to-night's presumption!"

She lifted her eyes to his, they were eloquent with feeling, and the tears still glittered upon the long lashes.

"If I may still enjoy your regard," she said, humbly, "I shall be proud and glad. You cannot tell how great an honour I have felt it to be your chosen ally, and how much fuller my life is because of you!"

He lifted the little hand and kissed it gravely.

"Let all things be between us as though this had never happened. I am not going to deny that I am sorely disappointed, because although I did not think you loved me as I would be loved, I hoped in time you would; but strong men do not fall beneath the first blow. So if I may not have the best place in your heart I still may have a share in it, and in time I shall learn content."

So he spoke, and she fondly tried to believe that like other men he would forget, and choose some other woman to wife, some woman who would make him her hero and her idol; but in her heart of hearts she knew that Gabriel Dundas was not quite like other men.

Very few words passed between them during the remainder of their walk, and at the little gate they parted.

"Good night," said Gabriel, "do not distress yourself because of me. Let me see a bright face to-morrow when I call."

"Good-bye," she answered, under her breath. "You are very good to me," and then she went slowly up the garden path, and he having watched until the door closed upon her, walked swiftly with bent head down the quiet road.

He could not go home yet, he must fight out his battle alone, and none but the man himself knew how bitter was the fight. With all the strength and force of his character, with all the accumulated passion of his thirty years he loved Enid, and the soul within him rose in hot revolt against his cruel fate. Who was this man who stood between him and his desire? Was he worthy such a heart as Enid's? Could he hold her as dear as he (Gabriel) did or consecrate his life so utterly to her service?

Once he paused, and a groan broke from him as he realised how much he had lost—how all the beauty and brightness had gone from out his existence. It was cruelly hard, could he bear it as became a man? Could he meet her daily, and yet give no cause of offence by look or word of the love consuming him. Could he?

"I will!" he said, aloud. "I will! She shall never have to say I was false to the friendship she valued and relied upon."

He had finished the fight, the worst was past. He set his face towards home, and

halted no more. Then, having dismissed the servants, he sat alone in the library buried in bitter thoughts. Here he had hoped that one day she would sit beside him whilst he waded through his mass of correspondence. He had often pictured himself looking up from those troublesome accounts, to see her dear face smiling back at him, and her eyes aglow with love.

For her sake he had made all things dainty and fair—and lo! she would have none of them. He threw out his arms before him, and buried his face upon them.

"Ah, Heaven!" he groaned, "it is all over now for me—wife and children are not for me—half the vigour is gone from my life!"

And yet, when he rose the next morning, after a sleepless and terrible night, there was no sign upon him by which one might guess his misery. He was only a little graver, but not noticeably so; as usual he called at the cottage in passing, carrying a book for Enid and some dainty sweetmeats for the youngsters, and his manner was so free from all embarrassment that Enid could almost believe she had dreamed the events of the previous night.

And so in the days that followed he came and went, cheerful, kindly, full of plans for the happiness and welfare of others, until the girl grew to regard him with something akin to reverence (almost all women are born hero-worshippers) and his "hands" declared in nervous English that the master was a "durned sight better nor any o' them big guns who made the laws, there weren't one wot could come nigh him for goodness and brains."

Christmas was fast drawing near when Gabriel first began to notice a change in Enid. It was slight—very slight in the beginning, but the eyes of love are keen, and he could never be blind to any change in her. It seemed to him that her laugh grew less frequent, her step slower, that by and by the sweet mouth took a mournful curve, and that there were shadows lurking in the depths of her great grey eyes. But to him she was always the same kind ally, the ready sympathiser with all his plans, and yet—and yet he was troubled because of her.

One day, as he watched her leaving the room, his eyes showed a little too plainly what he saw, so that Mrs. Lovel was emboldened to say,—

"You see it, too, Mr. Audley, the change in the child. She is anxious and troubled, although she thinks it disloyal to her lover to admit so much to me. He has been away nine months now, and—and although I would not have believed it, if any person suggested to me before he went, that he could grow tired of my child, I am afraid I must believe it now."

"At first his letters came very frequently, then perhaps once a week—of late not nearly so often; it is now nearly three weeks since Enid heard from him. She excuses him on the plea of lack of opportunity, says perhaps he is now in some isolated place where the postal arrangements are distinctly primitive, and that his letters may have miscarried—but I am afraid that in his case, at least, absence has not made the heart grow fonder, and I am troubled beyond measure for my child."

A wild hope rose in his heart that he might yet win Enid, but he crushed it down as unworthy, and said with all apparent calmness (though indeed his pulses were throbbing madly).

"You may wrong Miss Enid's lover! It is possible he may be ill and unable to write," then as the girl returned there was no further chance of speech between them. But all that day and for many days to come the burden of her grief lay heavily upon Gabriel's spirit.

Christmas passed in quiet fashion, the Lovel's and a few near neighbours dined at the Manor House, and later on helped Gabriel to entertain all the hands, and the poor of Pennethorne. Then the festivities came to an

end, and life went on in the same quiet way as before.

It struck Mrs. Lovel as ominous that neither letter nor little gift such as Maurice had been wont to send, arrived on Christmas morning.

It made her heart ache to see the look of expectancy change to bitter disappointment in Enid's eyes, and more than all it hurt her to hear the forced laughter and affected merriment with which the girl sought to disguise her pain. But she was a wise woman, and made no comment upon Maurice Audley's conduct. She felt that was more than Enid in her present state could bear.

On the twenty ninth of December the long-looked-for letter arrived, and Enid's heart throbbed with passionate delight when she saw the postmark was "Clifton." So he was in England, he would find time to see her—and the happy tears rose to her eyes, as with trembling fingers she drew out her precious letter. But as she read the light faded from her face, all the new-born gladness was strangled in its birth. It was so brief, so brief! and ah! dear Heaven, so cold, for this is what she read,—

"MY DEAR ENID.—

"You will be surprised to see by this that we are in England. We returned on the twenty-third but as our stay in London was so short, and the time of our departure so uncertain, I thought it best not to apprise you of my return, as it was quite impossible for me to run down to Pennethorne. On the twenty-third we had a fairly enjoyable evening at the Atheneum—the play a new one, being 'distinctly good.'

"Christmas Day we spent in awful state with Lord Hensage, coming down here on the twenty-sixth. If you answer this really bald epistle before the third, address me here, if not wait until you hear from me again as my movements are now very uncertain. I expect we cross to Calais in a few days, and from thence go to Paris.

"With best wishes to Mrs. Lovel and the children; love to yourself, and hoping you have had a very jolly Christmas.—Always yours,

"MAURICE."

Was that all? Not one word of love on which to feed her hungry heart; not one wish or hope expressed that they two soon might meet? Had he been so near to her, and yet could not seek her out? What did it mean? Was it possible, Maurice—the true, the noble, the idol of her girlish heart—no longer cared for her?

The letter dropped from her nerveless fingers to the floor, and she stood looking down upon it with despairing eyes.

She never heard the door opened, nor saw Gabriel until he came and touched her hand.

"You have had bad news," he said, gently. She lifted her wild eyes to his face, clutched at her throat as though she were strangling. Then she feebly tried to smile.

"I am a coward," she said, with a pathetic quiver in her voice, "and imagine all sorts of calamities on the smallest foundations. Do not notice me. I—I—oh! what shall I do? What shall I do?" and then the white hands went up to shield the whiter face, and all her frail young body was shaken by her sobs.

What could he say? What could he do to comfort her? He, who loved her so well, though so hopelessly.

"Heaven help you!" and as he spoke, his hand rested a moment, protectively, upon her shoulder, then he did the wisest thing he could—he went out and left her alone, feeling solitude was best for her.

She groped for her letter, she read it again and again with burning eyes, and set lips. Then she said, under her breath,—

"It will kill me! It will kill me, but I will make no sign! I will die like the Spartan boy! But, oh! Maurice! Oh! Maurice! if you had but been sure of your heart, how much happier for me!"

With all her gentleness, Enid Lovel was

very proud, so her answer to Maurice conveyed no reproach, asked no explanation. She wrote naturally of this and that, chatted on local news, related how she had spent Christmastide, and gave no least hint of the grief gnawing at her heart.

She met Gabriel with perfect calmness, saying,—

"You will forget you ever saw me so childishly weak. I am not often so, and the unusual gaieties of the season had caused me to lose my balance. Now," with a faint smile, sadder than all tears could be, "Richard's himself again."

But the days came and went, bringing with them fresh grief, added despair; hope deferred made sick her waiting heart, stole the bloom from her cheeks, the light from her eyes. And watching her in silence, gentle Mrs. Lovel almost cursed the day when Maurice Audley first met her darling.

"It will kill her!" she said to Gabriel. "She cannot bear suspense; better the dreadful certainty than this!"

"He is a villain!" Gabriel said, hotly. "He takes advantage of her defenceless condition. If I had him here but a moment!" and the pause he made was all too significant.

But it was curious that in all their conversations neither he nor Mrs. Lovel mentioned Maurice's name.

CHAPTER IV.

A LARGE handsomely furnished drawing-room on the outskirts of Clifton, from the windows of which one caught a magnificent view of Leigh Woods and Nightingale Valley. But Maurice Audley was not intent upon that view. All his attention was absorbed by a young lady (the only other occupant of the room) who half-reclined upon a couch, and looked up at him with arch eyes.

She was bewilderingly pretty, with corn-coloured hair and velvety-brown eyes. She had the saundest little nose imaginable, a mouth like Cupid's bow, and a complexion so dazzlingly fair that her enemies were wont (untruthfully) to assert that she owed it to art. For the rest she was slim and lissome, and the costliness of her dress and ornaments proved her to be a young lady of fortune.

"You are a disagreeable creature," she said, with an adorable pout. "You have not said a single pretty thing to me since you came in, and I stayed at home just to see you. You don't know what hard work it was to cajole Mrs. Routh to leave me here alone. She's an awful enthusiast over the proprieties—quite a prudes and prism kind of party."

She spoke with a slight—very slight—American accent, and her voice was thin and reedy, like that of most American women. Her manner, too, was freer than that of a well-bred English girl; but even her little insolences were forgiven her on account of her exceeding prettiness.

"Do sit down. You look so gigantic standing there in this waning light. If you are very good, you may sit here," indicating a chair close by. "Now, why are you so gloomy?"

"Do you know that in two days we leave Clifton?" asked Maurice.

"Well?" drawled the girl, with slightly raised brows.

"It is not well, Lilius!" passionately, "for it means separation from you! We are going to Calais first, then to Paris. Shall I ever see you again? Or is this to be our final good-bye?"

The soft colour came into the dainty face.

"Which would you rather?" she asked, lifting liquid eyes to his that were so sombre.

"Need you ask?" he cried. "Oh! Lilius, need you ask? Of course it is madness for Maurice Audley, the poor secretary, to aspire to the wealthy Miss Flaxman's hand. I wish you had not a penny, that so you might see I love you for yourself alone."

"It's a deal nicer to be rich," the girl answered, demurely, "and I am quite pretty enough to be loved for my own sake. If I said I like you very, very much, and that it is not impossible that Mrs. Routh and I should be in Paris in the course of a few days?"

"Lilia! oh, my darling! oh, my darling! do you mean this?" and then she was in his arms, laughing in a happy, breathless way, and bidding him cease kissing her, whilst her eyes all the while invited his caresses.

"Be quiet," she said, after awhile, "I want to talk to you. How can I do so, when you so stop my words? I don't want you to say anything about our engagement, until we are safe in Paris, because I am sure Daddy Routh, as my guardian, will object, and I'm not going to have my pleasure spoiled. He thinks I ought to marry 'a bloated aristocrat,' you know, but I guess I'll please myself, as I have always done. Oh! you don't know what a desperate character I am. You'll be sorry one day you ever asked me to—*to marry you!*"

"I never shall, and in nothing would I have you changed. One does not wish to have perfection spoiled!"

"Thank you, that is a very pretty speech. But Maurice, for my sake you will keep the secret until we join you over the water. It will only be for a few days at most."

"I would do more than that to please you, my darling!"

"You're a nice tractable boy. Now let me go. You have ruffled my hair shockingly, and it would be as well if I said good-bye before Mrs. Routh returns. I don't want to rouse her suspicions," and lothe as he was to leave her, Maurice saw the wisdom of her advice. But as he went towards the chambers he shared with Ferries Heneage, the thought of Enid struck him like a knife, and the shame of his inconstancy seemed too great a burden to be borne.

How could he tell her the cruel truth? How could he say that all his love had gone from her. In fancy, he saw her sweet face grown pale, and her eyes dark with anguish.

"I am a scoundrel!" he said, between his clenched teeth, "but I cannot go back. Lilia is more to me than life. If any one had said that I—I of all men should be so false to my given word, I would have resented such a speech with fiercest scorn. Enid, my poor girl! my poor girl! What will she say when at last she knows my despatch?"

The evening of his second betrothal was not a happy one, his conscience was a most uncompromising mentor, and would give him no least rest.

"Enid!" it cried to him, through all the night watches. "Enid!" Again he saw her face, as he had last seen it, wet with tears, and heard her broken voice saying, "Heaven's grace go with you dear!"

He was heartily glad when at last the morning dawned, and he could begin the necessary preparations for the journey to come. He did not write to Enid, he was not hypocrite enough for that, and he tried not to remember her; but in this he failed signally. No one could more despise him than he despised himself, and "soot of self is bitter work;" indeed, to one so proud as he had always been of his integrity and truth.

There was a certain suppressed excitement about him too, which attracted even the attention of the Honourable Ferries.

"What the deuce is up with him?" he thought. "I can't make him out; and he'd be certain to resent my questioning, he's so confoundedly close when he likes!"

In those last two days of their residence in Clifton, they saw a great deal of Miss Flaxman, and Ferries was not blind to the favour she showed his companion, and resented it.

The little American had touched what in him did duty for a heart, and he only lacked the courage to propose. There had been a time when Lilia had set herself to win him, only Maurice had superior personal attractions, and she liked his masterful ways, his

open and fervent admiration, whilst she almost despised the young lordling, with his vacuous stare and halting speech.

The journey to Paris was without event, and the two young men had been settled there a week, before Maurice received a note from Lilia, saying they were staying at the Hotel Bristol, and would he call upon her without delay.

"I have confessed all to Daddy Routh," she wrote, "and we had just a wee bit of a scene, but I suppressed him promptly. He asked what were your prospects, and I referred him to you; telling him, I should marry whom I pleased (which, indeed, I will), so come at once. You won't find my estimable guardian very formidable, and you shall have an interview with me first, to sustain you through your ordeal. *Au revoir!*"

Of course, Maurice went, and found Lilia prettier and more charming than ever. He was very desperately in love with her then. Afterwards he was interviewed by Mr. Routh, who plainly said he had no least control over his wayward ward, and so long as she married a gentleman of good character, he had resolved to allow her to take her own way.

"She needs a strong hand to govern her!" he said, in conclusion. "I am utterly unfit for my position!"

So the engagement was ratified, but Mr. Routh at once made inquiries as to Maurice Audley's antecedents. He owed at least so much to his ward. He had heard the young man speak of Pennethorne, and Lilia had a cousin residing there, to him he would apply for information—that cousin was Gabriel Dundas. And on receipt of the letter the master of the mills went to Mrs. Lovel with whom Enid was then sitting.

"I cannot tell," he began, "if ever I have spoken to you of a young cousin—an American on the paternal side—and a great heiress. If not, I may as well tell you she is very wealthy, very pretty, and extremely flippant. She is now in Paris, and this morning I got a letter from her guardian, telling me she has seen fit to promise herself in marriage to a penniless Englishman, and naturally Mr. Routh is anxious to discover if the story he gives of his past is true. It appears he hails from Pennethorne, and I thought you could perhaps help me to satisfy him on certain points. Do you remember Maurice Audley, Mrs. Lovel?"

"Maurice Audley! Did you say Maurice Audley?" gasped Enid, hoarsely.

She had risen, and was looking at him with burning eyes. Her face was wild and white, her arms had dropped slackly to her sides, but the slim hands hidden in the folds of her gown were so cruelly clenched that the nails pierced the tender flesh.

In one moment of keenest pain and pity Gabriel grasped the whole truth.

"I did not guess," he began, when she interrupted him in a laboured voice,—

"No, you did not guess how cruelly you would strike upon my heart. But it is better I should know the truth—oh! yes, it must be better. He is not the first man to break faith with the woman who loved him. And she, you say, is pretty? If he had asked his release I could have borne it better—but—but he could not bring himself to do that. Mr. Dundas, I have no further claim upon him. He is free to marry your cousin."

Her glittering eyes never wavered in their regard, and her voice did not tremble, only her bosom rose and fell with the awful pain tearing at her heart.

"Enid," the man said, shaken by love and sorrow for her, "should I be acting honestly in allowing my cousin to marry such a conniving villain?"

"He is not that," she answered, in the same level tones. "Ask all the good people of Pennethorne. He is a scholar and a gentleman, and for the rest he is only like other men—only I used not once to think so. Do not say anything to prejudice your stay up here I will build you a fire!"

cousin's guardian against him. I ask so much for my own sake!"

"If I obey you it is utterly against my wish."

"But you will obey. And now, I beg you crown all your favours by leaving me—I am best alone. I beg your pardon that I so startled you—the blow was unexpected. But I shall not suffer long. The young, they say, so soon forget."

A pathetic smile curved her lips, then as she offered him her little hand,—

"Heaven help you!" he said, and dared trust himself to speak no more, but with a heavy heart took his leave.

Then the mother, who was crying quietly, drew near to her child.

"Oh, my darling! oh, my darling! that this evil thing should come to you! He might have spared you. Oh! I hope he will suffer a thousand fold more than he has made you suffer! Enid, say something! Do not take this in such a dreadfully quiet way, and she laid her arms about the girl's neck.

But Enid put her gently away.

"Don't touch me, mamma. I cannot bear kindness yet. I want to be strong. I want to think," and she began to pace restlessly to and fro; but no tears quenched the brightness of her eyes or stained the white, drawn face. "Perhaps," she said, dreamily, "perhaps I shall understand it better soon—and then tears will come to help me. But now all is so vague—I cannot realise that all my life is wrecked at its very outset. Ah! you are crying for me who have no tears to shed for my own bitter grief. Poor mamma! Do not take it so much to heart. Remember you will have your daughter with you always now!"

And then she passed the weeping woman by, and went up with slow steps to her own room.

It was a bitterly cold day in January, and the snow lay deep upon the ground; but Enid, unconscious of bodily discomfort, flung wide her window, and kneeling by it, looked out over the white, dreary world with wide, unseeing eyes.

It was all ended now—all the love and the hope of a lifetime. There was no longer any hope of good to come. She should never see him again, and in the pleasant ways they used to tread together they might never more be seen.

Words of a poem Maurice had long ago read to her, came back to waken her heart to keener and crueler torture.

"Could two days live again of that dead year, One would say seeking us and passing here, Where is she?" and one answering, "Where is he?"

Couldst thou not watch with me?

"Nay, those two lovers are not anywhere; If we were they none know us what we were, Nor aught of all our barren grief or glee,

Couldst thou not watch with me?"

A sob broke from the pale lips, but no tears came; her brain was on fire, and wild thoughts dwelt with her.

"Oh!" she said, "if I could die now! Does grief ever kill?" and again, "Maurice, my darling! my darling! I would to Heaven we had never met!" and yet in all, through all she harboured no anger, and no resentment against him. She had loved him all too well for that. The heavy hours were by, and Mrs. Lovel, with the wisdom born of mother-love, did not go near her child. She would fight out her battle best alone, and though Enid was so uniformly gentle, she was also brave and proud, and would learn to hide her sorrow from those who made her little world.

The short afternoon closed in before Mrs. Lovel ventured into the little room, and then she did not by word or look refer to Enid's sorrow,—

"Dear child," she said, "you are cold and you must be faint. I have brought you an egg and some coffee, and if you would rather stay up here I will build you a fire!"

Enid drank the coffee, but refused to eat. In a listless fashion she watched her mother close the window, and kindle a blaze in the little grate. In the same way she submitted to her caressing, saying only, "You are very good to me dear!" and then once more she was alone.

She never could tell how she passed the long hours of that awful night when she lay unvisited of sleep, pondering over that happy, happy past which already seemed so distant, and wondering how she would learn to mask her sorrow in the days to come.

In the morning she went downstairs and about her household duties, refusing to neglect one of them, but it almost broke her mother's heart to see the change in her. She was so white, so still, so apathetic—her whole manner was so unnatural—if only she would break down! if only she would not fence herself about with this strange calmness!

And so she went about for days. She had written a short note to Maurice with a steady hand and quiet face. It stung him to keenest remorse, only this she did not know.

"I send you back your ring," she wrote, "and with it all the promises you made when love was with us, and life was glad. I have no longer any claim upon your heart or thoughts. I can only hope you may be very happy in the future, and that all your dreams of greatness may be realised! I pray, as once I prayed before, that Heaven's grace may be with you always.

"ENID LOVEL."

That was all, not one word of anger or recrim, not a hint of all he had made her suffer, what wonder that Maurice Audley loathed himself as he read, and cursed his own inconstancy.

"I wish I could see her utterly weak. I wish she would break down if never so badly!" said the anxious mother to Gabriel. "She will be prostrated by her grief if she will not give vent to it. When I look at her I can only think these words, 'She must weep or she will die,' and I cannot, I will not lose her," rebelliously. "Never had woman so dear and good a child!"

It chanced one day, Mrs. Lovel noiselessly entered the girl's room, to find her seated in a low chair with a packet of letters in her hand. It was the first time she had ventured to look at them since Maurice had been proved false; and, as she read, the hard light died out of her eyes, a spasm of agony contracted all her features, and her lips quivered ominously.

"My darling heart," she read, "no chance or change can dim the perfection of our love! You are to me what Heaven is to the good—losing you, I should lose all that makes life worth living;" and then, all suddenly, she threw out her arms crying, "I cannot bear it! Maurice, Maurice, you break my heart!"

In an instant Mrs. Lovel was kneeling beside her, her arms about the slender waist, and drawing the dark head down upon her breast she whispered, brokenly,—

"Here, my darling! Here on your mother's heart sob out all your sorrow. Tears will give you ease, ah, child! ah, child! All too soon you have come into woman's certain heritage of pain."

And there was balm in the passionate weeping; although ashamed of her ungoverned emotion when Enid appeared at table later on, she was more like to the old sympathetic, cheerful, Enid than she had been for long days.

CHAPTER V.

In the early spring Mrs. Lovel fell ill. She had never been strong, and a severe cold developed into bronchitis and pleurisy. It was a terribly anxious time for Enid, and she half forgot her ever present grief in her fears for her mother.

Gabriel came and went, bringing new life

and hope with him, and at the very worst took the twins away to the Manor House, so that perfect quiet was ensured.

The doctor spoke hopefully of the case, but as day followed day and there was no visible improvement in the patient, Enid insisted upon securing further advice.

"She is so weak," she said, in a quivering voice to Gabriel. "All the acute pain has gone, and she complains only of a dreadful lassitude and faintness. There are times when she lies so long unconscious I feel I must shriek aloud because I fear she is—dead!"

"I'll send for Silcoote. He's an authority on such cases. Oh, don't say one word of thanks or you will drive me away, and I really wish to see Mrs. Lovel if you will let me."

"Mamma is always glad to see you, and I, oh, I don't know what I should have done without you through all this dreadful time!"

"Thank you," he said, gravely, "it is good to feel I am of service to you!"

The great Doctor Silcoote came the next day, and made a careful examination of the patient, and Enid's heart grew sick with dread when she saw his grave expression.

She followed him downstairs into the breakfast-room, where Gabriel was waiting to hear the verdict.

"My dear young lady," said the doctor, laying his hand on her shoulder in a fatherly fashion, "you will need all your courage. It would be cruel to buoy you with false hopes. Pleurisy has given way, as it too often does, to rapid decline. You must prepare for the worst!"

"Oh!"

It was a long drawn, shuddering sigh, and just a moment her hands went up to hide the anguish in her eyes, just a moment both men thought she would faint. Then she recovered herself by an almost superhuman effort.

"Thank you for your candour," she said, piteously. "I am not ungrateful, but I wish you could have left me hope," and then, when once more she and Gabriel were alone she broke down suddenly. "Oh, my mother! my mother; help me to bear this, friend. I am grown so weak!"

He longed to take her in his arms and comfort her, but that might not be, and before he could frame any consoling speech she had recovered her self control.

"You will excuse me now. I cannot bear to spend one moment from her, knowing all the truth. Yes, you may come later on. I find my strength in you!" with grave simplicity.

Mrs. Lovel opened her eyes as her daughter entered the room.

"Dear child," she said, "you need not tell me Dr. Silcoote's verdict. I have known from the first how my illness would end. There, child, do not weep so bitterly. You must try to listen to me and understand my instructions. I would like, if possible, that Will should come home before the end. I cannot go in peace without wishing my boy good-bye, and after all is over—Enid! Enid! my darling, be strong now for mother's sake!" as the girl broke into a sharp cry of anguish.

"I will," she said, under her breath. "Go on, dear mother, I will not grieve you again," and she passionately kissed the cold, thin hand which lay upon the coverlet.

"When all is over I would like you to stay on here. There will be enough to keep you all in comfort. Let Dot and Teddy have the best education you can afford. They were getting beyond me in their lessons; and, come nearer yet, darling. Should there ever be a time when your heart will turn to Gabriel, remember that a mother's blessing rested upon your union!"

In May Mrs. Lovel died, and Enid found herself left with the care of two children upon her, but Gabriel relieved her of any labour connected with those last sad offices to the dead. In those first days of her bereavement she learned to lean upon him, and to go to him for

advice in any difficult matter, being sure he never would fail her.

Will returned home in time to receive his mother's blessing, but he was compelled to join his ship two days after the funeral took place, and life at Leofdale Cottage went on quietly enough.

Only at every turn Enid missed that dear presence. There were times when in her passionate longing for her mother she would grow sick and giddy, would stretch out yearning arms to the empty air, as though she sought to call her back into her loving embrace.

There were times, at first, when she would turn startled and trembling thinking she heard that beloved voice, and then she would sink shuddering upon her knees crying out wildly to the cruel grave to give back the treasure it enfolded.

At times the little ones forgot to grieve, as children will, and seemed well content with life even though "mother had gone away," but with Enid it was otherwise, and those who loved her best saw with concern how pale and frail she had grown, how very rarely now she smiled.

"You are wearing to a shadow!" said Gabriel. "You let the children trouble you too much. Will it rest you if I have them up to the House for a few days?"

"Oh, I could not part with them. I should miss them so sorely; and, indeed, I am very well. But as you are so needlessly anxious about me I promise as soon as the quarter closes to go to some quiet seaside place. It will be good for the children—but not even for them can I neglect my pupils!"

"Enid, won't you let me care for you and them too?"

"Hush!" she said, uncertainly. "I am not the Enid you used to love. I have gone through so much since then."

"But I love you the same—oh! no, dear heart!—not the same, but infinitely more. Will not you promise at least to try to think of me as I would have you do?"

"I dare promise nothing," a little wildly, "I will not bind myself by any vow. Oh, say no more now. Remember my recent sorrow, and be merciful to me!"

"It is yours to command and mine to obey," said. "I will not speak of love again until by word or deed you have given me ground for hope."

And that, thought Enid, would never be.

In July she took her babies, as she called them, to a little seaside village, where living was cheap, and the scenery pretty; and there the faint colour stole back into her wan cheeks, and fresh strength and vigour came to her even if joy was not. The simple healthy outdoor life was good for her, and the twins allowed her small space for brooding, so that on her return to Peanethorne there was a marked improvement in her appearance.

August passed, the harvest was gathered in, September, with its promise of berries and nuts, lured the children into the woods and through the bare fields.

"Oh, dear," sighed Enid, as she leaned upon the garden gate, "winter will soon be upon us again, and how I dread its advent. How late those children are! Jane should not take them so far from home," and she listened anxiously for the sound of the small, lagging feet. "They were sure to come home cruelly tired."

But all was silent. It was growing dusk now, and she felt a little nervous, so that when a man's quick tread was heard she turned to enter the house, when a voice—hoarse and eager—cried her name aloud,—

"Enid!"

Her heart seemed to stand still a moment, then it beat so fast and furiously she thought it would suffocate her, for there in the road was Maurice. His face was passion pale, there was a very madness of despair in his deep set eyes, and he was worn with travel.

As she looked on him all her soul was flooded with a deep, intense compassion; but

the scales fell from her eyes, and with a guilty feeling she knew that although her heart would be always tender towards him, although her hand would be always ready to help him, she loved him no longer as she used to do. That in the months of sadness and solitude she had trampled out the last spark of her ill-starred passion. She put out her hand to him.

"You have come back," she said, simply, "and you are in trouble, Maurice? Can I help you?"

"No one can do that," he said, bitterly, "and yet I thought it would comfort me only to see you. Look at me well, Enid. Your triumph is complete. The cup I gave you to drink has been offered me. I have sipped the very dregs of humiliation and despair. Won't you rejoice over my calamity? I deserve it, you know!"

"Why should I rejoice?" simply. "Maurice, you do not think so badly of me as that, or you would not be here now; and I know you never meant to wound me. It is over now, dear, all the smart and the sorrow—and we may be friends still."

"Enid, I think you are an angel!" he said, humbly.

"No, only the woman who loved you once, and hopes always to be your friend. Come in now, and tell me your trouble. It may be together we shall find a way out of it!"

"That can never be," gloomily. "She is already a wife." Then, as he followed her into the once familiar room he asked, "Your mother, Enid—she will not accord me a welcome?"

"My mother is dead!" she answered, in a low voice. "I cannot bear to speak of my loss yet. Tell me of Miss Flaxman!"

"She is now the Honourable Mrs. Heneage. I never guessed he cared for her, and I believed in her as one believes in Heaven. I was very happy in those early days of our betrothal, because I wilfully blinded myself to her faults and frivolities. But I grew angry when Heneage haunted us, when he danced attendance upon her at every possible occasion. She only laughed and openly coqueted with him before me, but I never suspected evil or treachery.

"I bore with her caprices patiently. Heaven knows I did! She was so young, and had been so flattered and spoiled; there was true gold beneath all the dross, and when once she was my wife, she would be more amenable to reason. That was how I argued with myself. Three weeks ago we were at Versailles, when I received a letter from an old college friend, begging me to go to him at Brighton; he was alone there and dying. I lost no time in obeying the summons, and in the days immediately following was too engrossed with my care of him to take much heed of the brevity of Miss Flaxman's letters, and she had often declared she was the worst of correspondents.

"My friend died, and, of course, I waited for the funeral. After that I learned from his will that he had left me all his little property (for, like myself, he was a lonely man), and I found myself possessed of an income of two hundred pounds per annum. Despite my natural grief at his loss, I could not but rejoice in my good fortune, seeing it would give me my wife earlier than I had dared to hope. I hurried back to Versailles, but I found there only Mr. and Mrs. Routh. Lillies they said was gone. She had married Ferries Heneage the previous day, with their full sanction and approval. The match was in every way a suitable one.

"They refused to tell me to what place the happy pair had gone. I was like one mad, and I suppose they feared I might take summary vengeance upon them. I returned to England, and had an interview with Lord Heneage, who acquitted me of all blame in the matter, and promised to assist me in the future. Then, hardly knowing why, and amazed at my own audacity, I came on here. I felt I must see you, and, for the first time in

my life, had lost all self-control. I was like a ship driven before the wind.

"Oh! Enid, I know now what I have lost, all the good my life might have held, all the bitter seed I have sown, which has yielded such a black harvest, and yet I dare ask you to pity me, for I am broken down, and all my strength has gone from me."

"It will return," she said, ever so gently. "You were never weak. Take courage, Maurice, there are better days in store for you," and with those words she gave her hands into his keeping.

"A woman who could so basely betray a trust is not worth a tear or a regret—in time you will think so. And for the rest be assured that my friendship is yours now and for ever. Ah, Maurice! we had need be lenient to the faults of others, when we remember our own," but neither her tone nor her look conveyed any reproach. Enid was above malice.

As he lifted his haggard eyes to hers, and saw the sweetness of the pale, tender face, Maurice Audley cursed the folly which had made him false to her, and longed with all his strength for the return of those dear, dead days, when, because of her, life had seemed so fair.

A rush of feet outside, then a noisy entrance, proclaimed the return of the twins. Teddy stared at the visitor with open eyes, then he said,—

"Why, it's Maurice! Oh! haven't you been ill? You look as old—as old as Methuselah!" and he began to shake hands warmly.

But Dot, who had picked up scraps of information concerning his treatment of Enid, shrugged her shoulders, and looking, scowling, at him, remarked,—

"What have you come back here for? Jane says you behaved like a brute to Sissie!"

"Dot!" cried Enid, "Jane should not say such foolish things, and you must not repeat them. Won't you speak nicely to Maurice, he is very unhappy and ill?"

"Then I am very glad!" announced the young lady, stoutly, as with head erect she went from the room.

"The child is right," said Maurice, heavily. "Let it pass!"

All Pennethorne was astounded when it found Mr. Audley had returned, and intended residing in its midst at least for a time, and Gabriel would have been more than human had he felt pleasure at the turn events had taken.

What more likely than Maurice should return to his old allegiance and win again the heart he had not cared to keep?

Enid's manner, too, bewildered him. She was so gentle and kindly towards Maurice, whilst daily her manner towards himself became more constrained, and he was not sufficiently versed in the intricacies of woman's nature to find hope in her reserve.

His visits to Leafdale Cottage grew less frequent, and it was noticed by some that the master was not so ready to smile as before. Then as the weeks went by, gossips said Maurice Audley haunted his old love's steps, that he was weary of his folly, and only longed now to make her what reparation he could. They speculated about her conduct with regard to him.

"Would she marry him or no?" But no one dared to speak of these things to her, and she went her way in sublime unconsciousness of the conundrum proounded.

CHAPTER VI.

WINTER came again, and still Maurice lingered at Pennethorne, and did not seem to find it dull. As it to prove the truth of the saying, that "unto him that hath more shall be given," he received so many applications for stories and articles, that he was compelled to refuse several. Already he was becoming known, and the papers spoke more than favourably of him.

He talked sometimes of going to town, but as yet, he had made no attempt to move, and he was almost ashamed to own even to himself, that his heart had gone back to Enid, and the thought of leaving her, was cruel as death.

Yes, it had come to that! His brief infatuation was over, and his better self cried out only for this girl with the sweet, pale face, and winsome ways.

If only she could forget! If only she would forgive! He rarely thought now of Lillies. Ferries had been pardoned his hasty marriage, and Lord Heneage had been won over to his side by the bride's prettiness and coaxing ways. She was rapidly becoming a society leader. So much he knew, but he asked no more—she had no longer any power to hurt him. He wondered that ever he could have loved so slight a thing.

Dot was ready to complain of Gabriel's "neglect," as she was pleased to call it, and cherishing malice in an unchristian-like fashion, said,—

"I don't want Maurice. He isn't half so nice as Mr. Dundas. Why have you sent him away, Enid? Why are you so kind to that horrid Audley man?"

"Mr. Audley is very unhappy and friendless!"

"I don't care, I am glad rather. Oh, I do wish he would go away, and our jolly times come back. Mr. Dundas is awful fun you know, and Maurice only sits and thinks and thinks as hard as ever he can, and he don't ever seem to remember Teddy and I, but just looks at us as if we were funny Japanese dolls. Do send him away, Enid dear, and I'll promise to be good a whole week!"

"When you are older, you will think more kindly of Maurice, and I do not like to see you forgetful of old friends, dear!"

"He isn't a friend!" Dot broke out tempestuously. "I hate him, and when I'm quite grown up, and may do just as I like, I'll never speak to him any more. Teddy's only a boy, so he don't care, and don't understand things; but I do, and I mean to keep my word," with which the precocious young lady rushed headlong from the room, and from that day neither Enid's entreaties nor commands, would induce her to be civil to Maurice. But always in his presence, she chanted Gabriel's praises, and lamented his absence.

With the advent of a new year, Enid, remembering her mother's wishes, despatched the twins to school, much against their wills. It must be confessed that Dot showed at her very worst, when the subject was broached to her, and it needed all Gabriel's reasonings and coaxings to reduce her to a proper frame of mind. He was the little maid's hero, and there was something in her innocent devotion, that was at once pathetic and amusing.

The house was very quiet when the children were gone, but the friends Enid's kindness had won her, would not allow her to feel dull. Visitors were plentiful at Leafdale Cottage, and first one, and then the other, would carry her off to their homes, for all loved the gentle little music teacher.

As the weeks wore by the change in Maurice's manner towards her, caused her much uneasiness. She could no longer doubt that his old love had waked again to life, and that he only waited an opportunity to declare it.

She felt she was guilty of a species of inconstancy, that she now shrank from the idea of becoming his wife. He was dear to her as a friend, but she could regard him in no other light.

Her feelings towards Gabriel she did not try to analyse. She only knew that she sorely missed his once frequent visits, and that it seemed less easy to stand alone now, than it used to do. She was conscious, too, of a vague unrest ever increasing, and a certain impatience of Maurice Audley's pronounced devotion.

It was rarely now she took part in any of

the entertainments the "master" delighted to give. She thought sadly,—

"I am no longer any use to him. He has no need of my services," and the sense of solitude grew greater upon her.

Once he spoke to her, as she came from church.

"Miss Enid, I am afraid you are missing the little ones. You grow so pale and quiet!"

"I seem to be missing all those things I used to prize!" she said, sadly. "Nothing will ever be the same again to me!" and then Maurice joined them, and there was no further chance of speech.

She tried to comfort herself with the thought, that Gabriel's voice had been very kind, although his words had seemed cold, but her hungry heart cried out for more than kindness; and that night she fell asleep with tears upon her cheeks. But even to herself she would not acknowledge the cause of her sorrow, and new strange restlessness that possessed her so entirely.

And Maurice, well, man-like he mistook her friendship for a warmer feeling. It was impossible Enid should change, and one day, soon, he could ask her to be his wife, and sheltered by his love, surrounded by tender observances, she would forget his sin in the past, and remember only to be happy.

On a dull February night as she sat alone, Enid heard the rush of many feet by the house, the shouts of men, and the shrill voices of women, and wondering a little over the cause of such unusual commotion, turned again to her book in the hope of finishing it.

But she was doomed to interruption. The door was suddenly and unceremoniously opened, and Jane, her cap awry, her face flushed with excitement rushed in.

"Oh! Miss Enid, the mills are afire. The master's down there, and they've sent for the firemen. There's a power of 'hands' gone by, and they say the place can't be saved!"

Long before she had finished Enid had started to her feet. Gabriel was there in the burning buildings, then how could she rest here?

It only needed this to teach her the truth in all its fitness, she loved him, and he was in danger.

"Put on your bonnet and shawl and come with me. I cannot remain at home!" and Jane, who had secretly wished to make one of the spectators, hurried to obey.

With trembling fingers Enid dressed herself, and then they went out into the night. The sky all around was lurid, the flames leapt up it seemed to the very clouds, and sparks flew in every direction.

All Penethorne had turned out to see the fire, and Gabriel being so popular, had many volunteer assistants.

Enid and Jane hurried down the road in the direction of the mills, passing many they knew, but Enid spoke to none. She had but one thought, and that was to find Gabriel, to assure herself of his safety, and implore him to come away from that dreadful spot.

In her fear and anxiety she almost ran, and Jane was breathless with the effort to keep pace with her.

She was relieved when suddenly Maurice joined them, and she could fall in the rear.

"Enid," the young man said, "let me take you home. The crowd will be frightful, and the wind is blowing sparks and fragments of burning wood in all directions. My dear, you must not go on," and he laid his hand with gentle authority upon her arm. But she shook it off impatiently.

"It is as safe for me as for you," she said, "and I could not rest at home. Do not try to stay me," and he, seeing she was resolved, said no more, but drawing her hand within his arm, hurried on beside her.

"He is there?" she asked presently. "Mr. Dundas I mean."

"Yes, and doing the work of two men. He seems not to know what fear is, for wherever the greatest danger lies, there is he. I heard

his foreman remonstrating with him, but he only said, "It is my duty, and if harm comes to me I have no one to regret my loss!"

"No one to regret his loss!" The words stabbed Enid to the heart. Oh, if she could but see him for a moment, and bid him for her sake, not to hazard the life she held so dear.

She could not speak, she could hardly breathe; but Maurice did not notice her agitation, the excitement of the scene engrossed him; for now they stood before the burning mills, and above all the hissing and roaring of the flames, the crackling of wood, the falling of water, they heard Gabriel's voice commanding and encouraging.

Once or twice his magnificent figure stood out darkly against the lurid sky; and then Enid caught her breath, whilst with fast clasped hands she prayed in her soul that Heaven would keep him safe.

Thanks to the exertions of the gallant brigade and the ready help afforded by the "hands" the fire was now being brought under; but considerable damage was done. The north side of the mills was a total ruin, and the east had suffered so severely that it was unsafe to linger there.

Gabriel's voice was heard warning the men away, and with one exception they obeyed, a young and venturesome lad still lingered behind, and a sick shudder ran through the crowd, as with a crash some beams and a portion of a wall fell suddenly, burying him beneath.

The fire was smouldering yet, and it was small shame to those around that they hesitated to enter. Most of them had wives and children depending for bread upon them. As Gabriel said he had none, and so it was Gabriel who went to the rescue.

A cry broke from Enid, a cry which, in its anguish, struck coldly upon Maurice's heart. He turned to look at her, but her face was hidden in her hands.

"Oh!" she said, under her breath, "could no other be found? Heaven have mercy upon him and me!"

Not a word did Maurice say, but his face was white and rigid, and in his eyes there was a look of dark despair.

Had he all along deceived himself? After all, was it Gabriel she loved? If so, who was he that he should seek to come between?

He strained his eyes to catch a glimpse of his rival's returning figure, whilst a great hush possessed the waiting crowd.

Then, all in an instant, one mighty shout rose and seemed to rend the very heavens, for there, scorched and begrimed, but all unharmed stood Gabriel, the young lad in his arms. The mother rushed forward.

"He is only stunned," panted the master, "get him home as quickly as you can. Here, lads, lend a hand." Then later, as the lad was conveyed away, "Friends, let me pass. I am spent. To-morrow I shall know how to thank you better for your generous help," and as the crowd divided he passed rapidly through the midst.

"Enid!" said Maurice, hoarsely, "look up, he is coming!"

She lifted her head then. She was very white, but her eyes held a deep joy, although they were not guiltless of tears, and like one in a happy dream she saw Gabriel approaching. He had stripped off coat and vest, and presented a sorry appearance, with his smoke-darkened face, singed hair and beard; but he was quite unharmed. Oh, thank Heaven, thank Heaven, quite unharmed! Seeing her, he started.

"Miss Enid, you here!" he exclaimed, and she answered faintly,—

"I could not remain at home, knowing you were in such peril. Mr. Dundas, I want to tell you how glad and grateful I am that you are given back to us again!" and then to his dismay, she burst into a passionate flood of tears, and all her lithe young form as shaken by her sobs.

"Go!" said Maurice, quickly. "To-night

she is unstrung and nervous, and you must need rest. To-morrow you can see her; but now let me take her home!" and, with his brain in a whirl, Gabriel suffered her to pass, saying only,—

"Good-night, and thank you for your sympathy!"

Then he went home walking like one in a happy dream. What did her agitation mean if not that she loved him—and had not Maurice Audley's haggard face told him the same story? Fatigue and loss alike were both forgotten, what was all the world to him compared with the love of Enid.

Trembling so violently in every limb, that Maurice compelled her to lean her whole little weight upon him, Miss Lovel went homewards. At the gate, where once they had parted in anguish and tears—years and years ago it seemed to the man—they halted.

"Good-night," said the girl, in a low voice. "You have been very kind to me!"

"Do not go yet," he answered, quickly. "I have something to say to you which must be said to night!"

She began to tremble, being all unnerved, so without any preface Maurice broke into his subject.

"Until an hour ago, Enid, I was vain and presumptuous enough to hope and believe you loved me still, and I was waiting only the opportunity to plead my cause with you. But your face, as you raised it to his, your tears and agitation, have opened my eyes to the truth! Dear, there is no longer any hope for me?"

She shook her head.

"Forgive me, Maurice, there is none!"

"I have no right to question you further!" he said, in hoarse and laboured tones, "but is it true that you love him, as I know he has long loved you? Tell me that, I am strong enough to bear the punishment I deserve?"

She looked fearlessly at him. "I can do nothing less than love him."

"Thank you for your candour, Enid. I shall go away. I have long intended doing so but love of you has kept me here. You will perhaps write me occasionally—you will not deny me your friendship?"

"That is yours always!"

"Heaven bless you dear! Will you kiss me once in farewell?"

She lifted her sweet face to his, a little sob caught her breath (for she had loved him once, and she could not help but pity him), and kissed him in token of farewell, and then, without a word, they parted.

In the early morning came Gabriel, and all unable to meet his eyes Enid rose, blushing and confused, and, offering her hand, said in a querulous, uncertain, voice,—

"You have quickly recovered from your fatigue, Mr. Dundas!"

Mr. Dundas took the little hand and held it. There was a gleam of fun in the blue eyes, an amused smile about the firm mouth.

"Why don't you look at me, Enid? Was my appearance last night so very shocking you do not care to risk a repetition of your fright?" and then, as the hot colour flamed into her cheeks, his eyes grew earnest and tender, and the face bent upon her was instinct with love.

"Darling!" he said, "darling! I would lose all I possess in the world if only to learn what last night I hope and believe I learned. Is it true, Enid, that you have found me just the least bit necessary to your happiness? Let me see your eyes, sweetheart; in them I shall find my answer!"

She looked up then laughing a little, crying a little; weak as a child in her great gladness.

"I love you!" she said. "Oh, Gabriel, how I love you!"

He lifted the lithe, small form in his strong arms, he laid his mouth to hers in the first long satisfied kiss of love, and the joy of that moment held them in happy silence.

For them all the glory and brightness of

perfect love and perfect trust; for them the sweetness of home, the fulness of content, the love of childish hearts! There were many who would rise up and call them blessed, many who could testify to the "master's" goodness, and his gentle lady's charity.

For Maurice, what remained? Fame and afterwards great wealth; but he has learned too late, too late! that neither riches nor honour can satisfy man's soul, and now, esteems above all good gifts the heart he flung so carelessly by.

[THE END.]

FACETIA.

"HALLO, boy, what's new in the paper today?" Smart Newsboy: "The date, sir."

The wise employer always laughs promptly when the proprietor makes a joke.

Dogs and men both have summer pants; but a dog has a fit sometimes.

MAN always likes to have his innings; but he also enjoys his outtings.

If you have anything to give, give it to the "hail fellow, well met." If you have anything to lend, lend it to somebody else.

There's nothing like sticking to a thing when you apply yourself to it, as the fly said when it alighted on the fly-paper.

"ALWAYS aim a little higher than the mark," says a philosopher. "What! kiss a girl on the nose? Never!"

WHEN a man screws his courage up to the sticking point, he usually does so by means of a corkscrew.

LONG: "What makes you think that Dr. Emdee has a bad temper?" SHORT: "He seems to lose his patients so easily."

A LADY never sweats. But step on the hem of her dress, catch the expression of her eye, and you will conclude she "don't have to."

A MARRIED man says there is generally music in the heir about two o'clock in the morning.

The following bull was made by a friend of Dr. Rogers:—"No children is an hereditary defect in some families."

"He can trace his ancestry back to the flood." "Oh, pahaw! that's nothing. Every body was in the swim then."

EVERY person on earth must have some sort of a pet, even if it is nothing better than himself.

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER: "Now, scholars, what do you understand by a 'movable feast'?" PUPIL: "A picnic."

A SCHOOL EXAMINER lately put the question: "What is the highest form of animal life?" "The giraffe!" responded a little girl.

J. A. DUMB man could suddenly regain his speech, the first long-pent-up words he would utter would doubtless be, "I told you so!"

"WHY do leaves fall to the ground?" asked a poet. "It is because they can't fall anywhere else. They have got to fall somewhere."

Mrs. LITTLEL (as her husband enters): "Hush! baby's asleep." Mr. Littlel: "But that's the only time I have a chance to be heard."

THE Barber who sticks up our hair, and the obiropodist who remodels our feet should be called "Destiny," for that is what "shapes our ends."

INSURANCE AGENT (to his partner): "What a shame animals can't insure their lives! Think what business we could do among cats—each of 'em has nine lives!"

JUDGE: "You attacked this gentleman. You knocked him down and robbed him of his watch." PRISONER: "Your honour is right; but if I had not taken the initiative, who can tell but that he might not have done the same to me?"

IT is just as easy to say a kind thing as a hard thing about your neighbour, but most people seem to think it isn't so entertaining to the listener.

HORSE JOCKEY: "That horse! Why, Mr. Mather, that horse has gone a mile in a good deal less than three minutes." CUSTOMER (after a critical examination of the animal): "On what railroad?"

"THEY say Mrs. Smith took on terribly at Smith's death." "Yes, poor thing! She could scarcely be reconciled to his loss." "Did she get much insurance?" "No; it was a total loss. All his policies had lapsed."

BROWNSON: "That was a queer inscription Enrico put on his wife's tombstone." LONGNECKER: "What was it?" BROWNSON: "'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have lost at all."

"IS there an opening for a man like me here?" asked Cheeks of the merchant. "Yes. You'll find it back there," returned the merchant. "It is marked, 'This way to the street.' Good-morning."

SHAWBER: "Some one has invented a new kind of bank to save money. Now there is only one thing more they want!" SINGLER: "What is that?" SHAWBER: "A new kind of man."

"No," said Miss Varden, "I don't like grown children; but I think little bits of children are real nice. Don't you, Mr. Bachelor?" OLD BACHELOR: "Perhaps little bits would be, but I don't like them whole."

"DID you interview the manager of the railway line about the accident?" asked the editor of the new reporter. "Yes, but he says he is waiting for the papers to come out, so that he may find out something about it."

AT THE BARBERS (Scene 1).—BARBER: "Shave, sir?" JUVENILE (aged sixteen): "You flatter me. No; only hair out." Scene 2.—BARBER: "Hair out, sir?" BALD-HEADED GENTLEMAN: "You flatter me. No; only shave."

"DO you see that pale young man calling out 'Cash!' at the ribbon counter?" "Yes." "Fate is awfully funny sometimes. Ten years ago, when we were boys together, his one ambition was to be a mighty hunter and catch the bounding buffalo with a lasso."

AN UMBRELLA carried over a woman, the man getting nothing but the drippings of the rain, indicates courtship. When the man has the umbrella and the woman the drippings it indicates marriage. To punch your umbrella and then open it means "I dislike you."

"YES, I had all the fellows in town for my rivals when I was courting." "And yet you carried off the prize?" interrupted his enthusiastic friend. "Well," corrected the other slowly, if not severely, "I don't altogether know about that, but I married the girl."

MR. WIGGLES (just in from the "read"): "That's a decent pretty girl you have in the kitchen. Call her in and say something to her." "MRS. WIGGLES (with rapidly-formed resolution): "Molly, come in here a moment. Your mouth is up to-morrow. As I am going to get a new cook, I will give you two weeks' wages, and you can get at once."

WHY JOHNNY DIDN'T GRADUATE.—"Define millennium, Johnny?" said the tired school-teacher, in the last half of the closing hour of the last day of school. "The millennium," said Johnny, promptly, "is the time when it will be vacation all the year, and there won't be any old school-teachers around to ask little boys fool questions."

PROFESSOR (lecturing): "Finally, I would instance mental aberration, a mania of which the learned are frequently subject, and occasionally make themselves ridiculous without knowing it." (After saying which, the professor took, instead of his hat, the lamp-shade off the bracket, put it on his head, and walked out.)

TIRIED TRAVELLER (alighting from train): "Which do you consider the best hotel here?" COMMERCIAL: "You see that building over there? That is the worst." TIRIED TRAVELLER: "But I don't want the worst. I want the best." COMMERCIAL: "Then I don't know what you're going to do. There is only one."

"WHAT do you know about heaven?" asked a Pittsburg Sunday-school teacher of the smallest scholar in the infant class. "It's where we go when we die," replied the small scholar, who is not four years old; "and little girls can talk all they please with no one to tell 'em to stop."

A COUPLE of street urchins were standing in front of a grocery, where a box of macaroni was displayed. Said the first. "Johnnie, what's them?" pointing to the box. The second boy, with an air of superior knowledge that was simply delicious, exclaimed, "Why, doncher know? It's what they lights gas with."

TECHNICAL phrases are sometimes happily applied to subjects apparently remote. A young lady who had discouraged the attentions of a suitor was spoken to about it by her father, who had an interest in the votes of the young men in his town. "Have you 'struck,' my child?" "Not exactly, father." "Ordered a boycott?"—"Not quite so bad as that"—"Withdrawn your influence entirely?"—"No, pa, simply filed his application along with others," was the democratic reply.

THE MAYOR of a small town on the frontier of France was very polite, particularly towards what is called the gentler sex. One day a lady with whom he was well acquainted called on him officially, to write out her passport. Although she abounded in physical discrepancies, she was vain to excess. Our mayor wrote out the requisite description of her personal appearance; and, when it came to describing her eyes, he wrote: "Eyes, dark, beautiful, and full of expression,—only one of them missing."

BEFORE THE DAYS OF PHYSICAL CULTURE FOR WOMEN.—HE: "Forgive me, dearest, I am making you walk too fast. I did not think. Forgive me." SHE (gently reproachful): "Certainly, dearest; but men never seem to—realise that women have—not—the strength. Oh, I am out of breath, dear!" IN THE PRESENT CRAZE.—HE: "Good gracious, Angela! you are walking me off my feet." SHE (briskly and firmly): "That's just what I intend to do. It's only five miles further. Brace up and step out."

THAT is a good story that is told regarding a young man who tried his hand at adjusting an insurance loss. A fire had occurred on a second floor, and the water had damaged goods on the first floor. The amateur adjuster interviewed the proprietor of the first floor and asked him if he intended to claim damages. "Certainly," said the man, and he pointed out where the water had damaged his place. "Did the fire come in here?" asked the young insurance man. "No; only water." "Well, then, sir, you should have a marine policy. We can't cover a water loss on a fire policy."

A YOUNG man and a young woman lean over the front gate. They are lovers. It is moonlight. He is loth to leave, as the parting is the last. He is about to go away. She is reluctant to see him depart. They swing on the gate. "I'll never forget you," he says, "and if death should claim me, my last thought will be of you." "I'll be true to you," she says. "I'll never see anybody else or love them as long as I live." They part. Six years later he returns. His sweetheart of former years had married. They met at a party. She has changed greatly. Between the dances the recognition takes place. "Let me see," she muses, with her fan beating a tattoo on her pretty hand, "was it you or your brother who was my old sweetheart?" "Really I don't know," he says. "Probably my father."

SOCIETY.

The latest fashion of a bow at the back of the collar seems to have caught on.

The Queen has ordered the removal of all check reins from her horses.

Japanese women do not use pins; indeed, in many cases do not understand the use of them.

The Prince and Princess of Wales have accepted an invitation of the German Emperor to pay a visit to Germany late in the autumn.

SARDOU, the great French playwright, writes a hand so fine that it almost requires a magnifying glass to read it.

The Duke and Duchess of Teck, with their three sons and Princess May, look an ideal English family. The Duke is quite an Englishman in his style, and is so full of fun that he is always a welcome guest.

Of all his decorations, the late Emperor Frederick most prized the medal which was given to him many years ago for saving a man from drowning.

The Princess of Wales has given orders that nothing need be submitted for her inspection, or that of her daughters, in which birds are used as trimming.

LADY TENNYSON is a musician of considerable ability, and has lately set to music fifteen poems of the Poet Laureate's which have been sung in public, and these she will soon publish with a dedication to the Queen.

ANOTHER medical school for women has been opened in connection with Queen Margaret College, Glasgow. It is said that the demand for highly competent women is continually increasing as India and the East become more enlightened and unprejudiced.

The Empress Frederick is taking great interest in the question of how to better the condition of German domestic servants. At a small evening meeting which she held at Homburg, Her Majesty spoke for some time on the subject, in a most interesting manner.

ROYAL matchmakers—who, by the way, seem to have given up the Duke of Clarence as a "bad job"—are already engaged in finding a husband for the little Queen Wilhelmina of Holland. It is not often that a maiden who happens to be a Sovereign in her own right is to be met with in the matrimonial market.

NONE of our veterans have attracted half as much attention from the German Emperor as Field-Marshal Sir Patrick Grant, with whom he has held several long conversations. The Emperor told Sir Patrick that nobody ever reminded him half so much of his "dear grandpapa" as he did, and at the Guildhall levee he devoted nearly ten minutes to chat with the Governor of Chelsea Hospital, in whose career and experiences he seemed particularly interested.

A HUNDRED and fourteen years should certainly teach some sort of philosophy of life, and it is interesting to know that a Philadelphian lady who has attained that age in the enjoyment of good health, attributes it to the fact that she has never worried about anything in her life. "If I didn't have anything I didn't worry about it, and I've never had even a headache." The conditions of a woman's life which enabled her to live for more than a century without worry must have surely been unique, but for all that there is, no doubt, a good deal to be said for her theory. It is worry, not work, that kills.

The Queen is to give Princess Aribert of Anhalt-Dessau an allowance of six hundred a-year, and the Duke of Anhalt will allow Prince Aribert fifteen hundred a-year. The Princess is to inherit twenty thousand pounds on the death of her parents, and the Prince will come into an estate of about two thousand a-year when his father dies.

STATISTICS.

EVERY person living has had 35,000,000 ancestors.

THERE are six Englishmen in India to one Englishwoman.

The army of China is sometimes put down at nine million soldiers.

DESERTION from the army costs the country £120,000 annually.

AFRICA is slowly but surely passing from the control of the native rulers. It comprises about 11,000,000 square miles, of which only 2,500,000 are governed by the Africans. France has 2,300,247 square miles; England, 1,900,445; Germany, 1,035,720; Congo Free State, 1,000,000; Portugal, 774,993; Italy, 360,000, and Spain, 210,000. While the share of France is largest, England's is most valuable.

GEMS.

Be cautious and brave. It requires a great deal of will and a great deal of caution to make a great fortune, and when you have got it requires ten times as much to keep it.

How much trouble he avoids who does not look to see what his neighbour says or does or thinks, but only what he does himself, that it may be just and true.

MERE acquired knowledge belongs to us only like a wooden leg or a wax nose. Knowledge attained by thinking resembles our natural limbs, and is the only kind that really belongs to us.

PHILOSOPHY hath never better cards to show than when she checketh our presumption, and crosseth our vanity; when in poor earth she acknowledgeth her irresolution, her weakness, and ignorance.

The every-day cares and duties which men call drudgery, are the weights and counterpoises of the clock of Time, giving its pendulum a true vibration, and its hands a regular motion.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

POTATO CONES.—Beat an egg, a teaspooonful of butter, a little salt and pepper, into two cups of cold mashed potato. Form in cone shapes, and brown in the oven on greased pans.

RICE PUDDING.—One half-cup of rice, one and one half-pints of milk, one half-cup of sugar, half a teaspooonful of salt, one table-spoonful of lemon rind chopped fine. Put all into a quart pudding dish, and bake in a moderate oven two hours; stir it frequently the first hour, then let it brown delicately. Serve cold with powdered sugar and cream, flavour.

CRAB-APPLE PRESERVES.—Take the red Siberian crab-apple. Wash, and wipe dry, leave the stems on, put in water to cover, and let come to a boil. Take up, let cool, and carefully remove the skins. Weigh, allow one pound of sugar to every pound of fruit. Make syrup, flavour with the juice of one lemon to every three pounds. Put the crab-apples on, and cook until clear; put in jars while hot.

POTATO ROLLS.—Lightly boil three pounds of potatoes, crush them, and mix in two ounces of butter and as much milk as will make them pass through a coarse sieve. Take a good half pint of yeast and half a pint of warm water to mix with the potatoes; add a pinch of salt, and pour the liquid over five pounds of flour; knead well, and add a little more warm milk if necessary. Stand before the fire for an hour. Beat the mixture well, and shape into rolls. Bake in not too warm an oven. Cut open the rolls, and toast and butter before serving.

MISCELLANEOUS.

OWLS cannot move their eyes.

A LONDON omnibus carries on an average 2,500 passengers a week.

The average family consists of five: husband, wife, and three children.

At the present time the most valuable autograph in the world is that of Shakespeare.

TIN is peculiar to England, like arsenic and jet; while Scotland alone yields antimony, and Ireland bog ore.

LOUDS on the sun of great dimensions, not perceptible by the naked eye, are said to be revealed by photography.

PHOTOGRAPHS of the sun are said to show that the great luminary makes a complete revolution in eleven years.

The Emperor of Japan has decreed that hereafter every challenge to a duel or acceptance of a challenge, is to be punished by imprisonment of from six months to two years.

OLD FASHIONED dictionaries derive luncheon from "nuncheon" or "noonshun"—"the refreshment taken at noon when labourers desist awhile from work to shun the sun."

In India elephants over twelve and up to forty five years of age are deemed the best to purchase, and will generally work well until they are eighty years old.

A NEW theory in relation to the moon has lately been advanced, to the effect that its light and shadows are incompatible with the theory of its spherical shape.

The principal pictorial paper in France, *L'Illustration*, does not contain as many advertisements in twelve months as the *Illustrated London News* does in one Christmas number.

The Chinese think that la grippe is caused by evil spirits. Therefore, when one of their number is stricken with it, they come around with their drums and in a neighbourly sort of way make him feel glad to die.

On the authority of a well-known homoeopathic practitioner, it is stated that out of 6,900 influenza cases treated homoeopathically by some fifty-eight medical men, not a solitary case had terminated fatally.

MILLIONS of men in India, especially on the richer soils and in the river deltes, live, marry, and rear apparently healthy children upon an income which, even when the wife works, is rarely above two shillings a week, and frequently sinks to eighteenpence.

THE French manufacture a paper linen so cleverly that it is almost impossible without examination to detect the difference between it and damask; and even to the touch the articles made of papier linge are very much like linen, and are often used in its place.

As a rule, the basin of the Black Sea is very deep, more than half of it sinking below 6,500 ft., though the deepest part is about 2,000 ft. more. The temperature and density of the water vary at different depths. Thus, near the Bosphorus it is 73.6 degrees at the surface; but at 130 ft. the temperature falls to 42 degrees.

ALMOST anything old is valuable now-a-days. An early edition of "Pickwick" has fetched as much as £30. The Prayer-book which Charles I. used on the scaffold at Whitehall is valued at £200. Seventy-five years ago a tooth of Sir Isaac Newton fetched £70, though, if offered for sale to-day, it would not be worth 7s. 6d.

THE lobster is greatly in dread of thunder, and when the peals are very loud numbers of them drop their claws and swim away for deeper water. Any great fright may also induce them to drop their claws. But new claws begin to grow at once, and in a short time are as large as the old ones, and covered with hard shells. The lobster often drops its shell, when it hides until the new shell is hard enough to protect it.

